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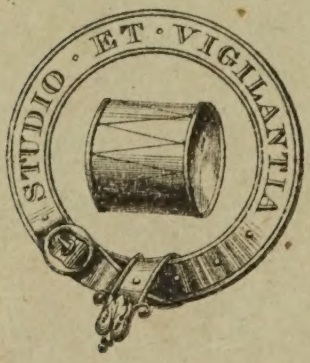

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AN ESSAY

ON

PRIMÆVAL HISTORY.

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PRIMÆVAL HISTORY.

BY

JOHN KENRICK, M.A.

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PREFACE.

THE substance of the following Essay was intended to form an Introduction to a larger work on the ancient history of Egypt, Assyria, Phœnicia, and the other oriental countries, whose civilization constitutes the earliest series of connected historical facts which has come down to us. To lay the foundation of such a history, it was absolutely necessary to inquire into the evidence of certain long-established and traditionary opinions, respecting the events and chronology of a preceding period, comprising the interval between the origin of the human race and the commencement of the special history of these countries. Those who confine themselves to any one ancient people are not required to give a judgment respecting the antiquity of mankind, or the connection of their various

tribes; those who pursue their researches upwards may escape from the difficulties of primæval history by breaking off, or turning aside, when they find that they have reached the point at which historical evidence becomes complicated with questions of theological opinion. Such reserve is impracticable, when we begin with the beginning, and endeavour to exhibit the early history of the East comprehensively, and according to the connection of its several parts; we must either follow the authority from which such a history is usually derived, or assign some reason for departing from it. I found, however, that what I said, in justification of my adoption of the latter course, necessarily became more controversial than suited the character of historical writing; and I have therefore published it separately, though I am aware that it still bears traces of its original destination, which are not quite in accordance with its present form.

In this preliminary research into the evidence of primæval Asiatic history, it was impossible to avoid an inquiry into the historical authority of

the earliest portion of the Jewish Canon, and more specifically of the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis. It is the last, and, as regards established opinions, the most difficult and delicate, of a series of questions, which have successively forced themselves into discussion, since the interpretation and exposition of Scripture have been emancipated from the authority of the church, and science and history have been independently cultivated. Not a single century, indeed, had elapsed, in which some struggle might not be traced, between the supposed authority of Scripture and opinions derived from other sources. In appearance, however, the controversy was confined within the limits of Scripture itself, each party claiming its sanction: it turned upon questions of metaphysics and ethics—sciences whose doctrines cannot be enunciated in very precise language. And as the phraseology of Scripture, in reference to such subjects, has that freedom and variety which belongs to popular style and popular conception, it was not difficult for those who held very oppo-

site opinions, to find authority for them in the same volume.

The discovery of an inconsistency between the doctrines of physical astronomy and the language of Scripture presented a more formidable difficulty. A skilful metaphysician might undertake to reconcile free will with predestination—a skilful commentator, St. Paul with St. James; but to reconcile the Copernican system of the universe with a phraseology founded on the belief of the revolution of the heavenly bodies around the earth, was clearly impossible. In this emergency, the head of the Romish Church was prompt in his decision, and condemned the astronomer and his doctrine, that no suspicion might exist of an error in the language of Scripture and the long-established belief of the Christian world. It was hardly worth while, for such a difference, to encounter the risk of placing religion in contradiction with scientific evidence. For it might be said, with considerable plausibility, that nothing was directly taught in Scripture on the subject of astronomy; that con-

formity, in the use of popular phrases, to an erroneous popular belief is no evidence of a participation in that belief, and that much inconvenience must have ensued, had the scriptural writers taken upon themselves to contradict and rectify the prevalent opinions of their countrymen on the structure and laws of the sidereal heavens. It would have been equally unreasonable to expect, that they should interrupt their narratives of the course of Providence in patriarchal history, to explain the formation of dew, or the refraction of light in the rainbow. And such has been the answer usually made by Protestants.

The peace thus established between theology and science was first seriously threatened by the modern discoveries in geology. While its founders were groping their way through a chaos of facts, imperfectly ascertained and hastily combined, it was held sufficient to represent Scripture as the safer guide; and occasions of triumph were not wanting, as one ill-constructed geological hypothesis after another crumbled into ruin.

Gradually, however, from this chaotic mass of opinions, a scientific theory was evolved, founded upon careful observations, generalized by philosophical induction, and connected by analogies extending over the whole globe. Though it might still be charged with impiety, it could no longer be represented as *crude speculation,* by any one who was capable of estimating its evidence and process of reasoning. Of the system thus erected it was a demonstrated part, that our globe was not brought into the state in which man was placed upon it, by a single and instantaneous act of creative power; that ages of ages had elapsed from the commencement to the close of this process, and that the production and extinction of species, in vegetable and animated nature, had been going on during the greater part of this all but infinite period. The cultivators of this science themselves were startled at the results of their own inquiries, and in no small degree perplexed, how to vindicate them from the charge of contradicting the authority of Scripture.

It is evident that the old reply will no longer avail—that these writings were not designed to teach us natural philosophy.* This is not a case of transient allusion or acquiescence in popular phraseology. It is quite clear that the intention of the Hebrew writer was to teach the philosophy of the universe and the history and order of creation, according to the conceptions of his age. They may seem to us rude and simple; we may be at a loss to reconcile them with the discoveries of modern science; but we cannot doubt that his narrative was propounded and received in the full belief of its truth.

Fresh difficulties have arisen with the extension of other branches of knowledge. The physiologist is embarrassed by the attempt to maintain at once the unity of the human species, its origin from a single pair, and the chronology of the Deluge,

* Σκοπὸς ἦν Μωσεῖ οὔτε φυσιολογῆσαι οὔτε ἀστρονομῆσαι; ἀλλ' εἰς θεογνωσίαν καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κοσμογονίας ἀνθρώπους ἀγαγεῖν. Joann. Philop. in Hexaemeron ap. Phot. Myriob. ccxli. This, however, was not very consistent with the purpose of his work, σύμφωνον δεῖξαι τοῖς φαινομένοις τὴν τοῦ θεσπεσίου Μωσέως κοσμογονίαν.

which allows only a few centuries for the development of the most marked and permanent varieties. The ethnographer is equally perplexed by the multitude of languages, of different roots, structure and analogies, which disclose themselves to his research in all quarters of the globe. History cannot now be confined within the narrow limits which the common chronology allows, even when enlarged by an arbitrary and uncritical preference of the Septuagint to the Hebrew. It demands for the multiplication and diffusion of mankind, the progress of the arts and sciences, and the consolidation of empires, a period far longer than the four or five centuries into which these vast and gradual changes have been crowded. The necessity of this enlargement of the time of primæval history may not be perceived by those who are acquainted only with the historical and scientific literature of our own country; but it is well known to all who cultivate independently any of these branches of knowledge, and have watched the progress of inquiry in foreign countries, where its results are

made known with less of timid deference to established opinion than among ourselves. Such a state of things is embarrassing to science, and full of danger to the interests of religion; but till the difficulty is fairly acknowledged, it can never be fully met.

It is not at all removed by the reply, so often repeated, that religion and science, being both true, cannot be inconsistent with each other; those who make the objection, and those who give the reply, do not use the same words in the same sense. The objector, when he charges science with undermining religion, means that it impairs, by contradicting, the authority of the writings on which revealed religion is founded; while the apologist, if he has any very definite meaning, understands by religion, those great and indestructible sentiments of the human mind, which preceded, and may survive, all written records and all historical evidence.

The difficulty is not fairly met by alleging, that there are obscurities in all ancient writings,

and that the high antiquity of those in question makes their interpretation especially uncertain. The apparent flexibility which Scripture has exhibited in the hands of its commentators, and the contradictory opinions which have been deduced from it, may have led those who are not conversant with Hebrew philology and biblical hermeneutic, to suppose the meaning much more uncertain than it really is. No doubt, the Hebrew language and literature present greater difficulties to an interpreter than those of Greece and Rome. Job and Hosea are not of such simple and obvious construction as Homer and Euripides. It happens, however, that the portion of Scripture which relates to cosmogony and primæval history is remarkably free from philological difficulties. The meaning of the writer, the only thing which the interpreter has to discover and set forth, is everywhere sufficiently obvious: there is hardly, in these eleven chapters, a doubtful construction, or a various reading of any importance, and the English reader has, in the ordinary

version, a full and fair representation of the sense of the original. The difficulties which exist arise from endeavouring to harmonize the writer's information with that derived from other sources, or to refine upon his simple language. Common speech was then, as it is now, the representative of the common understanding. This common understanding may be confused and perplexed by metaphysical cross-examination, respecting the action of spirit upon matter, or of Being upon nonentity, till it seems at last to have no idea what *creation* means; but these subtilties belong no more to the Hebrew word than to the English.

These remarks are rendered necessary by the very vague manner in which the phrase *interpretation of Scripture* is used. We are not surprised to find a popular writer, like the author of the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation,* (p. 407,) asking, " May not the sacred text, on a liberal interpretation, or with the benefit of new light reflected from nature or derived from learning, be

shown to be as much in harmony with the novelties of this volume, as it has been with geology and natural philosophy?" Similar language, however, is held by Professor Whewell,* who cannot be ignorant, that the interpretation of the Bible is governed by rules as little arbitrary as that of any other ancient book. In his chapter of the "Relation of Tradition to Palætiology," which is really a discussion of the most advisable mode of reconciling Geology and Palæontology with Scripture, he speaks repeatedly of the necessity of bringing forward new *interpretations* of Scripture, to meet the discoveries of science. "When," he asks, "should old interpretations be given up; what is the proper season for a religious and enlightened commentator to make a change in the current interpretation of sacred Scripture? At what period ought the established exposition of a passage to be given up, and a new mode of understanding the passage, such

* Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, Vol. II. ch. iv. p. 147, 8, 9.

as is or seems to be required by new discoveries respecting the laws of nature, accepted in its place?" He elsewhere speaks* of "the language of Scripture being invested with a new meaning," quoting, with approbation, the sentiment of Bellarmine, that "when demonstration shall establish the earth's motion, it will be proper to interpret the Scriptures otherwise than they have hitherto been interpreted, in those passages where mention is made of the stability of the earth and movement of the heavens." It is difficult to understand this otherwise than as sanctioning the principle, that the Commentator is to bend the meaning of Scripture into conformity with the discoveries of science. Such a proceeding, however, would be utterly inconsistent with all real reverence for Scripture, and calculated to bring both it and its interpreters into suspicion and contempt; and we must suppose the Author to have meant, that our ideas of the *authority* of certain portions of Scripture are to be modified,

* Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, Vol. II. ch. iv. p. 146.

when we find their obvious meaning to be at variance with scientific truths. If this were his intention, we must regret, that he has not expressed himself with more precision, and given to a most important, but obnoxious truth, the weighty sanction of his name.

Λόγος γὰρ ἐκ τ' αδοξούντων ἰὼν
Κἀκ τῶν δοκούντων αὐτὸς, οὐ ταυτὸν σθένει.
Eur. Hec. 294.

Since, therefore, we can neither deny the fact of a contrariety, nor remove it by any warrantable means, it is necessary that we seek some other explanation of our difficulty. The credibility of every historical writing must stand on its own ground, and not only in the same volume, but in the same work, materials of very different authority may be included. The various portions of a national history, some founded on documentary and contemporaneous evidence, some derived from poetical sources, some from tradition, some treating of a period anterior to the

invention of writing, some to the very existence of the nation, and even of the human race, cannot possess an uniform and equal degree of certainty. We cannot have the same evidence of the events of the reigns of David and Solomon, and those of the period comprehended in the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis; nor can we be surprised, if, in the necessary absence of documents respecting primæval times, a narrative should have formed itself, reflecting the opinions, partly true and partly erroneous, of the people among whom it had its birth. Had the Hebrew literature not borne this character, the phænomenon would have been unparalleled in history; it would have wanted a most decisive stamp of high antiquity had it exhibited, in its earliest pages, a scientific, not a popular philosophy. That the Jewish people should have been so far superior in religious belief, to the nations by whom they were surrounded, and so much inferior in culture and the arts of life, appears to me inexplicable, except on the supposition, that

their creed had some higher origin than their own speculations and inferences. It is the natural consequence of this divine instruction, that their early traditions should be, as we find them, more pure and rational than those of their neighbours; but it does not necessarily follow, that their primæval chronology must be exact, or their history every where free from exaggeration and misconception.

These opinions may be startling to many persons, by seeming to derogate from an authority, concerning which "sanctius ac reverentius visum credere quam scire." Yet I believe it will be found, that neither our religious feelings nor our religious belief are necessarily and permanently affected, by the exercise of a freer and more discriminating criticism upon the Jewish records. Creation will still appear to us an example and proof of omnipotence, though in the limitation of its manifold and progressive operations to a period of six days, we trace the influence of the Jewish institution of the Sabbath. Neither the impulse nor the duty

of conjugal affection will suffer the slightest diminution, though we should regard the narrative of the creation of the woman, rather as a simple and natural expression of the relation and mutual feeling of the sexes, than as an historical fact. Conscience and observation, no less than Scripture, teach us the weakness and defects of our moral nature; these will remain precisely the same, and furnish the same motive to humility and watchfulness, and the same necessity for Divine aid, whatever may have been the first occasion on which man's evil passions broke out into transgression of the will of God.

On the other hand, I am persuaded that there are many persons of truly religious mind, to whom it will be a relief from painful perplexity and doubt, to find that the authority of revelation is not involved in the correctness of the opinions which prevailed among the Hebrew people, respecting cosmogony and primæval history. They delight to trace the guiding hand of Providence in the separation of this people from amidst the

idolatrous nations, in order to preserve the worship of a Spiritual Deity, and in all the vicissitudes of their history till its consummation. They admire the wisdom and humanity of the Mosaic institutions, and acknowledge this dispensation as the basis of the Christian; they feel the sublimity and purity of the devotional, moral and prophetic writings of Scripture; but they can neither close their eyes to the discoveries of science and history, nor satisfy their understandings with the expedients which have been devised for reconciling them with the language of the Hebrew records. I know that this is the state of many minds; the secret, unavowed, perhaps scarcely self-acknowledged convictions of many others are doubtless in unison with it. And such views would be more general, were it not for a groundless apprehension, that there is no medium between implicit, undiscriminating belief and entire unbelief. It has been my object to show that between these extremes there is a ground, firm and wide enough to build an ample and enduring structure of religious faith.

To another objection which may be urged against the following Essay, that it sweeps away so much which has been regarded as historical, and leaves nothing in its place but a dreary vacuity, I can only reply, that those with whom taste is a standard of credibility, should not engage in critical researches. It would certainly be more agreeable to retain the painted scenery by which the stage of history has been surrounded, than by its removal to open to ourselves a view into a region of doubtful light and indefinite extent. Yet it should not be forgotten, that the fictions with which this region has been filled have proved an obstacle to the extension of true historical knowledge; and however small the territory which can be gained by such extension, it will be of more real value than all that must be sacrificed in order to obtain it.

AN ESSAY

ON

PRIMÆVAL HISTORY.

Primæval history is commonly understood to mean, an authentic detail of the events by which man, as he appears at the commencement of historic times, is connected with the origin of the species or with the creation of the world. To believe itself in the possession of such a history, appears to have been in all ages and countries almost a necessity for the popular mind. The abrupt termination of the chain of dependence between the present and the past, the effect and the cause, is always painful. Religious feeling requires that the origin of the human race should be connected with some definite act of creative power. The pride of nations

revolts from a short and obscure genealogy, and endeavours to trace their ancestry by recorded steps to the general parents of mankind, or to some one partaking in a special degree of the divine nature.

To construct such a history for popular use was an easy task among the nations of antiquity. Its materials were found in the belief of the people themselves, among whom traditions of uncertain origin, reaching back beyond the commencement of history, came ready formed, but rude and imperfect, to the hand of the fabulist and the poet. They were not embarrassed by historical criticism, and supernatural interposition furnished the means of solving every difficulty. Each nation usually assumed to itself the honour of representing the primitive human stock, grafting others, if it recognised their existence, upon this indigenous tree, and making its own country the scene of the events of primæval history. Philosophical inquirers were content to regard mankind as living from time immemorial in the land which they occupied, or, if they were notoriously of recent origin, traced them by the light of tradition or conjecture to some other division of the human race. One school believed the world and man to

have been strictly eternal; another to have had a definite origin in time;[1] they speculated on the first abode of man,[2] but they left it to mythology to give a history of the steps by which he had emerged from his primæval condition, and possessed himself of the elements of civilization. No one national belief on these subjects was assumed as the standard to which all others must necessarily conform; few synchronisms were attempted, and these only in recent times, and between nations evidently connected by affinity and early intercourse.

The Hebrew literature, containing in the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis, the cosmogony and primæval history which that people received, became accessible to other nations by the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, at Alexandria, in the third century before the Christian era. Little use, however, appears to have been made even of those parts which might justly have claimed the notice of the Greek and Latin historians, the accounts of the origin of the people and the real institutions of their law. Even had the heathen writers been familiar with the Jewish cosmogony and primæval history, they would not

[1] Diod. Sic. 1, 6. 9. [2] Justin. Hist. 2. 1.

have been received as of any higher authority than the corresponding speculations of the Indians, Persians or Egyptians; the only result would have been, that a place would have been given them, among the *Opinions of the barbarians respecting philosophy*.[1]

But primæval history assumed a new aspect when the adoption of the Hebrew Scriptures by the Christians, as inspired and consequently infallible, seemed to offer a connected and chronological record of the human race, from its very origin.

At first, in the ages when Christianity had to maintain a struggle with heathenism for its existence, the prophecies of the Old Testament, the types of the law, or the prefigurations of the events of the Gospel in Jewish history, chiefly occupied the attention of Christian writers. When, however, more settled times opened upon the Church, and a more comprehensive literary culture was introduced, ancient history and chronology began to be studied. Julius Africanus, a Christian of the third century, appears to have been the first who published a systematic chronology. His work, which consisted of five books, is lost, with

[1] Diog. Laert. Proœmium.

the exception of a few fragments,[1] incorporated by later writers, but we know that it went back to the creation of the world, which he fixed at 5,500 years before Christ. Eusebius, who followed Africanus, adopted the same plan, placing in one column the persons and events of Jewish history, and arranging those of Assyria, Egypt and Greece synchronistically with them. And this method has since been all but universally adopted. Doubts have been raised, as we shall see, respecting the true chronology of the Jewish books, especially in the times between the Creation and the Flood, and between the Flood and the Call of Abraham; but hardly any, except those who have altogether denied the divine origin of Judaism, have questioned, that could the original text be ascertained, its dates and facts must be implicitly received.

The strict notion of the inspiration of the entire Jewish Canon has been modified in recent times, even in the schools of theology, much more in the minds of men of reflection and inquiry. In such an investigation as the present, it is unnecessary to attempt to fix its nature or amount,

[1] They have been collected by Rowth in his Reliquiæ Sacræ, vol. iii.

For it is evident, that the credibility of a history can never be satisfactorily established by the assumption of its inspiration. This is to invert the true order of proceeding. If we find a fact predicted and accomplished, which the unaided sagacity of the human mind could not anticipate, we have recourse to inspiration as the only source of knowledge; if we find a system of truth promulgated, such as no human power of discovery could reach, we infer a supernatural communication. So in regard to history; if what it records could be proved to be true, and yet no human means appeared by which such truth could be ascertained, there would remain only the supposition of a divine communication. But such a case cannot really occur, because the very process of submitting the truth of history to investigation, implies the existence of some independent evidence of the facts which it contains. The supernatural origin of an historical document can never, therefore, be made the basis of belief in its historical authority.

In the following inquiry into primæval history, the Jewish records are not assumed as the sole and infallible source of knowledge. They are regarded as an evidence of the belief of the

nation which admitted them among its sacred books; a nation of high antiquity, placed in contact from its origin with those ancient kingdoms in which civilization reached its earliest perfection, Assyria, Egypt, Phœnicia; a nation which possessed the art of writing from remote times, and applied it to historical purposes. Like all similar works, however, they are subject to be judged of according to the external evidence of their authorship and date, and the internal evidence of their truth, to be confronted with the records and compared with the belief of other ancient nations. There is nothing in these writings to forbid our subjecting them to this test. The book of Genesis incorporates written documents of unknown ages and authors; the book of Joshua appeals to ancient poetical writings; the Chronicles of Israel and Judah are cited as authorities for the histories of these kingdoms respectively; and while the legislator and the prophet claim to speak by the immediate dictate of heaven, no author of an historical book of Scripture alludes to any supernatural source of knowledge.

Taken in that large sense which popular use has given to it, primæval history goes back even beyond the first appearance of man upon the earth.

Almost every nation of the ancient world had its own Cosmogony, including the origin of the earth and heavens, the elements, animals and vegetables, man and even the gods themselves.[1] As they are only speculations, though assuming an historic form, they represent the imperfect state of natural philosophy in the age when they were framed. They generally agree in representing a dark state of chaos and intermixture of the elements, preceding the distinct existence and separate properties of each as we find them in the present system.[2] In some, an intellectual principle presides over this change; in others it appears to be brought about by the mere operation of natural causes, analogous to those which are now in action. The idea of creation out of nothing, of power exerted without an object on which it could exert itself, has always been conceived by the mind with difficulty, which seemed to be relieved by the introduction of a chaotic matter, on which the act of creation might be performed. The difficulty thus removed a step further back, was thought to be solved, and only the more reflecting

[1] Anc. Un. Hist. 1. 23. foll. Diod. Sic. 1, 6. 2, 30.

[2] Euseb. Præp. Ev. 1, 7. Diod. Sic. 1, 7. Hes. Theog. 116. Ovid. Metam. 1, 4 seq. Beros. ap. Euseb. Chron. Can. p. 6. ed. Scalig.

inquired, how chaos itself had come into existence. To facilitate the conception of an unknown process by assimilating it to something known, creation was compared to the hatching of an egg,[1] to the growth of a seed, or the production of animals ignorantly supposed to follow the action of the sun's rays upon the liquid mud.[2] Compared with these rude efforts of the most civilized people, to solve the problem of the world's existence, and connect themselves by an unbroken chain with the origin of all things, the narrative of the Creation in the Book of Genesis is remarkable for its sublimity and truth. It speaks a plain and simple language, ascribes everything to the benevolent purpose of one wise and omnipotent being, and relates the successive stages of creation in general harmony with the discoveries of science, though by no means with that exact accordance which has sometimes been asserted. But though such a narrative could only have been produced among a people divinely instructed in the great truths which distinguish revealed from natural religion, it has evidently received its form from the popular belief. To regard it in all its details, as

[1] Euseb. Præp. Ev. 3, 11. Aglaophamus 1, 475. p. 115. Ed. Viger. Von Bohlen Altes Indien, 1, 162. Lobeck

[2] Diod. Sic. 1, 7.

the authorized history of the changes of the globe, from the time when all was "without form and void," to the creation of man, would require that we should either close our eyes to the evidence of science, or adopt interpretations of the text which are not warranted by philology, nor in accordance with the obvious meaning of the writer. Such are the attempts which have been made to give to the words "in the beginning," "create," "day," a sense different from that which they commonly bear. Geology has shown that our earth was not brought into the state in which man was placed upon it by an instantaneous act of creative power; and has established an order of succession and intervals of time in the production of animal and vegetable life, which were certainly not in the contemplation of the author of this history.

The description of the original residence of man equally manifests this influence of popular conception. Of the four rivers which had their head in the stream which watered Eden, two, the Euphrates and the Tigris, have their sources in the mountains of Armenia. And though by no means identical,[1] in the belief of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, the native country of the Israelites, they

[1] Ritter, Geogr. 10, 101.

might naturally be supposed the same. By the Phison was probably intended the Phasis, and by the Gihon, some imaginary stream, to which various actual rivers may have contributed their share, bounding the land of the eastern Cushites, and reappearing in the Abyssinian arm of the Nile.[1] A belief in the existence of some elevated spot, situated in the North, is common in the popular conceptions of ancient nations. Such was Mount Meru to the Hindus, Albordj to the people of Iran, Olympus to the Greeks, and with this was readily combined in the oriental notion the flow of rivers to the four quarters of the earth. The learned volumes which have been written on the site of Eden and its four rivers, might have been spared, if it had been considered, that we have here, not the data of science, but the vague localities and imaginary combinations of popular geography.

In the same spirit we should receive the narrative of all the period which precedes the migration of Abraham, the true origin of the Jewish people, and, therefore, the point at which, if contemporaneous written records did not begin to supply the materials of history, at least a body of historical

[1] Josephus, Ant. Jud. i. 1, 3.

tradition may have formed itself. It describes the primitive condition and early degeneracy of man, and the first steps of his civilization, with a constant reference to a superintending Providence, and thus embodies truths of the highest moment, and in accordance with the conclusions of philosophy. But we see that these truths are not merely clothed in a popular form, but mingled with circumstances, originating in popular conception, and which may therefore not be strictly historical. Such accounts of times which precede the commencement of written history, are produced and modified by the state of knowledge, feeling and opinion among the people with whom they originate, and these must be taken into the account, in estimating the historical truth which they comprehend.

The variety of form and colour which the human race now exhibit, suggests the question, whether they are to be explained by an original creation of races respectively characterized by them, or by the assumption of one primary form, from which the rest have deviated under the influence of soil, climate, food, and the other circumstances by which the condition of men is diversified. There is but one *species* of man, if we take the word in its

popular sense, that of an aggregate of qualities transmissible by descent, and so invariably found together, that where we perceive the existence of one we infer the rest without disappointment or uncertainty.[1] The print of human footsteps in the sand would lead every observer to infer the existence of beings of the same stature, physiological structure and functions, intellectual faculties and moral sympathies with himself. All these are invariably found together, the same in number and mutual relation, differing only in degree. In every part of the world, notwithstanding their differences, the tribes of men intermingle freely, and their offspring continue to multiply, unlike the product of the union of dissimilar species. It has been further argued that, according to the analogy of nature, individuals of the same species, however numerous or widely diffused, appear to originate from one stock, not from many; and hence that the human race has probably had

[1] The definitions given of *species* by physiologists and naturalists generally involve some historical fact. Cuvier, Th. of the Earth, p. 116, defines it as "all the individuals which descend from each other, or *from a common parentage.*" Prichard, Res. into the Physical History of Man, i. 106, says, "Species includes only the following conditions — *separate origin* and distinctness of race, evinced by the constant transmission of some characteristic peculiarity of organization."

its origin from a single pair,[1] all the actual varieties having been subsequently introduced. Little, however, can be concluded from this analogy, because we have no historical proof of such a diffusion of species from a single centre. All that can be proved is, that the regions of the earth have their characteristic groupes of productions, vegetable and animal, but as we do not see the species originate, we cannot pronounce on the number of individuals of which the first stock consisted, on merely analogical grounds.

We find, it is true, traditions, as they are called, that is, a popular belief and apparently historical account, of the origin of the human race from a single pair, in remote and unconnected spots. But it is so obvious an answer to the question how they originated, to reverse the process by which they multiply, and trace them back to the simplest combination out of which increase can arise, that we cannot receive this coincidence, as a proof of a real reminiscence of a fact. On the contrary, these legends are so purely local, so intimately connected with the manners, productions and language of the region in which they are found, as to lead to the con-

[1] Prichard, i. 97.

clusion that they have been independently formed, and that their resemblance in the one point of supposing a single pair the origin of the whole race is to be explained by the cause above mentioned.

Whatever difficulty the naturalist may have in determining, whether the difference between the European and the Negro, the Calmuck and the Red Indian, are what he calls specific differences, or amount only to varieties, the differences themselves are palpable, and urge us to inquire into their cause. Two modes may be conceived, in which they may have originated from a stock primarily the same. Varieties spring up from time to time in the present races, we know not by what law, exhibiting individuals differing widely from the general type of the race, and as their peculiarities are *genetic,* that is, exist from the birth, and are not superinduced by accident, they are capable of being transmitted to a new progeny. If we suppose a variety so constituted, to be confined to itself, a race might in time originate, in which these peculiarities should be perpetuated. We see among the lower animals, that varieties thus arise, which do not vanish again, but remain in the line in which they first appeared. But in the human race the limits of these accidental varieties

are narrower than in the brutes, they bear the character of disease and deformity, and we never see them prolonged for more than a few generations. There is no known instance of accidental varieties giving rise to communities, all characterized by them, or of their being combined, like the existing varieties in colour and form among men, with differences in speech, manners and religion. Where no intermixture of races has taken place, these differences were not less marked, nor differently localized three thousand years ago. The Negro, with all his peculiarities of form, colour and hair, appears just the same in the paintings of the age of Thothmes III., fifteen centuries before the Christian æra, as he is now seen in the interior of Africa. Origination from accidental varieties, such as we see in the lower animals, would also exclude all idea of adaptation to climate, which, nevertheless, in the case of the Negro, is undeniable, and probably pervades the other races also.

It is difficult to assign limits to the influence of climate, joined to that of soil, food and modes of life, in producing changes in the human form. It is probable that its range was greater when civilization was less diffused, which enables man to protect himself against the injurious effects of

the elements, and gives variety to his occupations, his clothing and diet. No direct experiment can be instituted to ascertain it, and the observation of nature's own processes is attended with great difficulty. It is but lately that scientific attention has been directed to ethnography, or the description of the physical, intellectual and moral peculiarities of the different races of men: we have no means of comparing the same race under altered circumstances, or, if we perceive a change, of assigning its own share to each of the complex causes which may have produced it. In general, however, the survey of those races whose successive conditions we can ascertain, presents to us rather the proofs of the tenacity with which nature adheres to her established forms, than the flexibility with which she varies them. Still these forms are not absolutely unchangeable; we see nations whose language proclaims them to have descended from a common stock,[1] exhibiting a different complexion and features, according to the country which they occupy, and we cannot presume to say how far this assimilating power extends. No known effect

[1] It must not be supposed that I mean by this expression a single family. That common speech, the elements of which are found from Scandinavia to Hindostan, may, itself, have been spoken by men of different physical peculiarities, and this weakens the argument.

of climate is adequate to account for the existing varieties of complexion. We see no tendency in the Negro race settled in North America to approach the colour of the Whites, though other peculiarities of the Negro are said to wear out in those who are the most perfectly domesticated.[1] On the other hand, no tendency displays itself, in the white races established in intertropical climates whose population is black, to approach the colour of the natives, if there be no intermarriage between them, much less to assume their osteological and physiological characters. The trifling infuscation which exposure to the sun produces is confined to individuals, and the children are born and grow up as fair as in temperate climates. Yet, though we cannot discern in the effects of heat any adequate cause for the diversities by which different climates are distinguished, there is a general conformity between colour and climate, an adaptation in the peculiarity of this part of the system, to the circumstances under which life and health are to be maintained. We by no means invariably find the peculiarities of the Negro in complete combination; the deep

[1] Dr. Stanhope Smith, Complexion and Figure in the Human Species, p. 55.

black complexion and the woolly hair are seen, without the osteological characters in some tribes of the Indian Archipelago. The nations of the deepest black colour, however, are in general found in the equatorial and intertropical regions of the old world, while tawney and fair-complexioned races appear successively, as we ascend to higher latitudes.[1] The apparent exceptions to this rule may be explained from the different elevations of tracts which lie beneath the same parallels. We must, therefore, either suppose that each of these races has had a separate stock, and as their shades are endless, the number of these stocks will be infinite; or that climate has in some way produced the diversities, which appear to follow a climatical law. In our ignorance of its influence we cannot pronounce this latter supposition impossible;[2] but we may safely say, that if all the varieties which we see have been superinduced on a common stock, a very long period must be allowed to accomplish this — a period in which

[1] Prichard, Researches, bk. iii. ch. 15.

[2] The pigmental membrane of the Negro has been regarded as a proof, that this race must have been from the first distinct, as it exists in no other race, and yet seems essential to the Negro. M. Flourens, however, has made experiments which show that its rudiments are found in the other races. Edin. Journ. of Phys. Sc. 1843.

Time may have integrated the infinitesimal effects which alone can be marked within the limits of history. It is only, therefore, by a very great enlargement of the common chronology, that we can avoid the conclusion of an original diversity of race.

Since these varieties blend with each other by imperceptible gradation, it would be useless to endeavour to fix their number on any scientific principle. The common division of the inhabitants of the ancient world into the Caucasian, the Calmuck, and the Ethiopic varieties, has the advantage of being founded on obvious differences, and is well adapted to history. The name Caucasian has been derived partly from the circumstance that near this mountain, in Circassia, Mingrelia and Georgia, the most perfect specimens of this race, and of the human form generally, are found; partly from a theoretical opinion, that the tribes which display the same peculiarities have been diffused from this region, as from a centre. Its characters are, an oval form of the skull, when viewed in front, an expanded forehead, a facial angle approaching the perpendicular, and a similar relation of the upper and lower jaw. The complexion varies from fair to a deep shade of black.

To these are joined such a stature and proportion of the frame as are fitted to give the highest combination of strength and agility. To this class belong all the nations most remarkable in ancient history, the Indians and Persians, the Assyrians and the other Semitic nations, the Libyans and Moors, the Greeks and Romans, and the inhabitants of Modern Europe, as far as they descend from the Celtic, Gothic, or Sarmatian stem. The Ethiopic skull is narrow and elongated, as if by lateral compression, the facial angle is less, the jaws and teeth project, the nose is flattened and turned up, the lips are thick, and the hair short and crisp.[1] The inhabitants of Africa in the equatorial regions exhibit the type of this race in its widest deviation; the blackest colour, the most woolly hair, the lowest facial angle, the smallest average quantity of brain and *medulla oblongata*, and a frame of inferior agility and strength. Where this variety reaches its extreme point of deviation, as in the Negro of the countries south of the Great Desert, it seems to be accompanied with a degeneracy of the intellectual powers, which has condemned this race to be, in all historic times,

[1] Prichard, Res. i. 289, seq.

the slaves of Europeans and Asiatics. The ancient Egyptians and the other tribes which occupied the valley of the Nile, approached by their hair and colour to the Ethiopic type, by the form of the skull to the Caucasian, and this alone might prove the impossibility of fixing any precise lines of distinction. The Mongolian or Calmuck [1] variety is characterized by the breadth of face, produced by the great lateral extension of the bony arch which unites the cheek bone to the skull, giving to the whole countenance something of a lozenge shape; and by the flatness of the upper part of the face. In the Chinese and the Calmucks, the eyes are generally placed obliquely, with the internal angles descending towards the nose. The Finns in Europe, the Nomadic nations of Northern and Central Asia, the Japanese and Chinese, belong to this type. In the ancient world they were represented by the Scythians and other tribes, who hovered on the borders of the civilized countries, and occasionally made irruptions into them. China and Japan exhibit a social state, not inferior to that of ancient Egypt and India, and may be regarded as the most perfect specimen of this race. In the Esqui-

[1] Prichard, Res. i. 305.

meaux and Finns, its outward peculiarities are the most repulsive, and accompany the lowest state of intellect and manners. But Mongolian civilization hardly came within the view of the writers by whom ancient history has been transmitted to us, or only at its close. To one of their tribes, the Huns, was owing the most remarkable revolution which the world has undergone, the overthrow of the Roman empire, and the settlement of the Germans in Western Europe.

Primæval History is usually divided into the Ante-diluvian and Post-diluvian period. If the whole of the human race, except eight persons, had really been destroyed, and all traces of the past works of man obliterated by a flood, which covered the whole earth, such an event must have made not only a division but a chasm in history.[1] Knowledge and art, being reduced to the individual attainments of the survivors of this catastrophe, must have begun their course of improvement almost from the elements. Society must

[1] I do not examine the attempts which have been made to show, that the writer of the book of Genesis meant to speak only of a partial flood, because they rest on no philological ground, and we cannot admit any other. He evidently believed, that the whole earth was covered by the deluge, and that the whole human race, as it existed in his day, was derived from the sons of Noah.

have retraced all its stages, from that of a single family to civilized empires. The surface of the earth must have been brought into such a state by the weight and agitation of a flood which rose to the level of the highest mountains, that in the attempt to resume its cultivation, men must have experienced the most formidable difficulties, and must have spread and multiplied much less rapidly than in the ordinary state of the world. Attempts have indeed been made, to show that the destruction of the human race would be soon supplied by its power of increase, and that even the shortest interval between the Flood and the appearance of populous kingdoms in history, which the common chronology allows, would suffice to call many millions into existence. But in countries reduced to such a state as that in which Asia must have been after the flood, it is impossible that men should multiply in that geometrical ratio, by which their numbers rise so rapidly under the pen of the calculator.[1] Every thing which contributes to the protection and support of man, must have been recreated; and as nature does less for the supply of his wants, than those of

[1] The calculations of Petavius, Cumberland and Whiston may be seen in the Anc. Un. Hist. 1, 361.

the brutes, they would increase more rapidly than he did, and add to the difficulties which impeded his diffusion.

The evidence of geology has been appealed to in proof of the occurrence of the Deluge.[1] When first the existence of aquatic animals in the solid strata was noticed, such a submersion of the earth was supposed to have brought them there. By more careful study and reasoning it was perceived, that instead of indicating a sudden action of water, limited to the surface, and strictly confined to the period of a year,[2] these phænomena were the result of causes tranquilly operating through a long series of ages, in the depths of the ocean, or in lakes of fresh water, and this hypothesis was necessarily abandoned.

It was subsequently made evident, that since the deposition and elevation of the most recent strata, the earth's surface has been violently torn by currents of water, which have transported

[1] The existence of a Deluge is certainly not disproved by showing that there exists no natural cause adequate to its production. Yet it is important to remark, that Bessel has proved, that no combination of the forces of the sun and moon *could* raise a tide which should cover the tops of the mountains. See Humboldt's Cosmos, p. 325.

[2] Gen. viii. 11, 13.

blocks of stone, accumulated hills of gravel, and imbedded in them the remains of land animals now no longer existing, or natives of countries very remote from those in which these remains are now found. This class of phænomena became in its turn the evidence of the Deluge.[1] Further investigation, however, showed, that they were the results of prolonged, repeated, and multiform currents of water, the later of which had modified the results of the earlier: the gravel of which the beds were composed was found to have been drifted from various centres and in opposite directions; the animals whose remains were preserved in them, to belong to different æras of extinct zoology.[2] Nor could the annihilation of their races be consistently referred to an event expressly described as intended for their preservation.[3] It must therefore be acknowledged, that geology affords no specific confirmation to the Jewish account of the Deluge, although it gives abundant

[1] Buckland's Reliquiæ Diluvianæ, Observations on the organic remains contained in caves, fissures and diluvial gravel and other geological phænomena, attesting the action of an Universal Deluge. 1823. The opinion expressed in this work is retracted in the same author's Bridgewater Treatise, i. p. 94.

[2] Ansted's Geology, 2, 121.

[3] Gen. vi. 19.

testimony to the submersion of almost every part of the globe, under circumstances different from those which this narrative describes.

Should future research show, that in the latest results of what has been called the Diluvial period, the remains of man exist, along with those of mammalia, belonging partly to extinct and partly to existing species, we shall still be far removed from the proof of a simultaneous and universal Deluge. The retention of the name *Diluvial,* which was originally understood to mean, produced by the Noachic Deluge, leads to much popular misapprehension. Among geologists themselves, it is now recognized only as a convenient name for those results of moving water, which exceed the power of the present rivers, even in their highest state of flood.

The early histories of many nations include traditionary accounts of a Deluge which has destroyed either the whole human race, or the population of the country in which it happened. They have been received, like the geological facts before mentioned, too indiscriminately, as evidence in favour of the common opinion; and, therefore, it will be necessary to examine them separately. The most striking coincidence with the Hebrew

account is found in the Babylonian traditions, as preserved by Berosus and quoted by Josephus and Eusebius.[1] The number of ten kings, said to have reigned in Chaldæa before the Flood, corresponds with the number of ten generations, intervening between Adam and Noah,[2] though neither in the names, nor actions, nor length of life attributed to them, can any resemblance be traced to the antediluvian patriarchs. The tenth in succession was Xisuthrus, who was warned by Saturn that the world would be destroyed by a flood, and built an ark in which he saved himself, his family, and animals of all kinds. On the flood's subsiding, he let loose some birds from the ark, who, on their second flight, returned, having their feet daubed with mud; and at length came back no more; whence Xisuthrus, concluding that the surface of the earth had re-appeared from beneath the waters, descended from his ark upon the mountains of Armenia, raised an altar, and worshipped the gods. The Zend-Avesta, the sacred book of the followers of Zoroaster, contains the mention of a deluge, but the circumstances of it bear no resemblance

[1] Euseb. Præp. Evang. lib. ix. p. 414. Chron. Armen. i. p. 31. Jos. Ant. 1, 3, 6.

[2] Euseb. Chron. Gr. p. 5. ed. Scalig.

to the Mosaic narrative. The earth is covered with a flood of waters, from which Mount Albordj first emerges, but instead of being sent for the destruction of the human race, it is the source of the rivers, and of all the other benefits which the element of water produces to mankind.[1] According to the Hindu tradition of the incarnation of Vischnu, the Preserver, in the form of a fish, Menu was commanded by him to build a ship, in which to save himself and seven holy persons, with seeds of all sorts and beasts of the field, from the deluge which was about to destroy a wicked race. The flood rises, the ship rests on the top of Himavan, and Menu becomes the father of a new race.[2] Remarkable coincidences with the Jewish account of the Deluge have also been pointed out, in the traditions of the Mexican and other American nations; and as they are found combined with a close resemblance in their astronomical systems to the science of the oldest people in Asia, it seems more natural to suppose that this traditional belief in a deluge was brought by the progenitors of the Mexicans from their ancient

[1] Bundehesch, § 7. Kleuker's Zendavesta, 3, 68. It has been strangely misapprehended by Mr. Faber, Pagan Idolatry, 2, 60.

[2] Bohlen altes Indien, 1, 218.

Asiatic abodes, than that it originated in the New World.[1] The Phrygian legend of Annacus or Nannacus, does not go beyond the fact of a deluge.[2] Among the Phœnicians we find no mention of such a tradition, though from the resemblance of their cosmogony with the Jewish, we might have expected it. The priests of Sais, when Solon mentioned the flood of Deucalion, ridiculed the novelty and imperfection of the Greek tradition, alleging that there had been, and would be, many partial destructions of the human race, both by fire and water; and Plato himself who records this conversation, speaks in his own person in the same strain.[3] These are evidently not traditions of an historical event, such as the Mosaic deluge, but fanciful speculations.[4] Nor has anything come to light in the monuments of Egypt,

[1] Clavigero, Hist. Mex. Eng. Transl. i. 244. Pl. 19. p. 410. 464.

[2] Suidas sub voce Νάννακος.

[3] Tim. iii. 21 seq. Critias, iii. 111.

[4] "To the period of Yaou, something more than 2000 years before our æra, the Chinese carry back their tradition of an extensive flood, which by some persons has been identified with the universal deluge recorded in the Old Testament. After a careful perusal of their own written accounts, we feel persuaded that this deluge of the Chinese is described, rather as interrupting the business of agriculture, than as involving a general destruction of the human race." — Davis, The Chinese, vol. i. p. 140.

indicating an affinity in this point with the Asiatic tradition.[1]

The name of Deucalion appears early in the remains of Greek literature, but at first only as the mythical patriarch of the Hellenic race.[2] The subjects of the Homeric poems would not naturally lead to the mention of the flood; but it could hardly have been omitted by Hesiod, in his deduction of the history of mankind through its ages of gold, silver, brass and iron,[3] had it been known to him, at least as anything more than a local flood in Thessaly. The account of Deucalion, given by Apollodorus (1. 7. 2.), bears evident marks of being compounded of two fables originally distinct, in one of which, and probably the older, the descent of the Hellenes was traced through Deucalion to Prometheus and Pandora, without the mention

[1] Manetho, as quoted by Syncellus, p. 40, appears to speak of the sacred books of Thoth, as translated *after the Deluge into Greek*, by the second Hermes; but this absurdity cannot have proceeded from Manetho himself, whose name has been borrowed by some later writer. Ammianus Marcellinus, 22, 15, speaking of the Egyptian grottoes, says: "Syringes ut fertur, periti rituum vetustorum, adventare diluvium præscii, metuentesque ne cærimoniarum oblitteraretur memoria, penitus operosis digestos fodinis per loca diversa struxerunt." But this account is too late, and too full of obvious errors, to merit any credit.

[2] Hesiod, quoted by Strabo, 7. p. 446. ed. Oxf.

[3] Hes. Works and Days, 107—172.

of a deluge. In the other, the destruction of the brazen race by a flood, and the re-peopling of the earth by the casting of stones, is related in the common way. That these two narratives cannot originally have belonged to the same mythus, is evident from their incongruity; for as mankind were created by Prometheus, the father of Deucalion, there was no time for them to have passed through those stages of degeneracy, by which they reached the depravity of the brazen age. It is doubtful, therefore, whether the tradition of Deucalion's flood is older than the time when the intercourse with Asia began to be frequent. Hellanicus,[1] about the beginning of the fifth century before Christ, appears to have mentioned the ark in which he saved himself, as resting on Mount Othrys in Thessaly. Pindar, in his ninth Olympian, describes Deucalion and Pyrrha as descending from Parnassus, and re-peopling the earth by a race sprung from stones.[2] As we reach the time when the Greeks enjoyed more extensive and lei-

[1] Schol. Pind. 9, 60. ed. Boeckh.

[2] The παλαιοὶ λόγοι of which Plato speaks, Leg. 3. 2, 677, related that *many* destructions of mankind had taken place, some by deluges, some by diseases, and in many other ways. On one of these deluges, in which all but a few perished, he builds, as many have done since, a theory of the progress of society.

surely communication with Asia, through the conquests of Alexander, we find new circumstances introduced into the story, which assimilate it more closely to the Asiatic tradition. Plutarch mentions the dove, and its employment to ascertain that the waters of the inundation had retired.[1] Lucian, an Asiatic Greek, in describing the legends of the temple of Hierapolis, adds the circumstance, that the sons of Deucalion, with their wives, and pairs of all living animals, were preserved in the ark;[2] and thus, when we reach the country in which the tradition first appears, we find the closest conformity to the narrative in Genesis. The flood of Ogyges has no claim to be considered as a tradition of a general deluge; his name, as a king of Attica, does not occur in any extant author before the age of Alexander, and the story of his flood appears to belong to Bœotia, a country very subject to inundations from the stoppage of the outlets, by which the Lake Copais discharges itself into the sea.[3]

It must thus appear very doubtful whether the earliest mythology of the Greeks contained any

[1] Plut. viii. 930. ed. Wyttenb. (968 F.)

[2] Luc. de Dea Syria, § 12. 9, 93. ed. Bip. It has been doubted if Lucian be the author of this treatise; but the question is of no importance in reference to our inquiry.

[3] Phil. Museum, 2, 348.

reference to a destruction of the human race by a flood. But the coincidence of the Babylonian, the Indian, the Mexican, and the Jewish accounts, can hardly be explained, without supposing a very high antiquity of the Asiatic tradition, an antiquity preceding our knowledge of any definite facts, in the history of these nations. That the scriptural narrative should have originated among the Jews in Palestine, and have been borrowed by other nations from them, is highly improbable: all the circumstances bear the traces of a Mesopotamian origin. The ark is represented as being built of cypress, the only wood fit for shipbuilding which this region afforded,[1] and covered with bitumen, which its asphaltic springs furnished in abundance.[2] The dove was a sacred animal in Syria, probably wherever the goddess Mylitta was worshipped.[3] Ararat, on which the ark rests, is in the vicinity of the sources of the two great Mesopotamian rivers, and its summit the loftiest in Asia, westward of Caucasus. The plain of Shinar is the place in which the history of mankind re-commences, when the Deluge is over.[4]

[1] Arrian. 9, 19.
[2] Herod. 1, 179.
[3] Tibull. 1, 7, 18, with the note of Broukhusius.
[4] Gen. xi. 2.

However high we may be warranted to carry up the existence of this tradition in Asia,[1] it will not necessarily follow that it was founded upon a real fact. A tradition is a popular belief, and must, like everything else, have a cause; and for its special characters, a special cause. But that it is not, in itself, evidence of the truth of the fact which it assumes, may be seen in almost every case, in which the popular belief can be confronted with scientific, monumental and documentary evidence. There is hardly a remarkable remnant of antiquity to which it has not attached some false explanation. It matters not whether the tradition have been written down and incorporated with history; it gains no higher authority by this change; the cause of its uncertainty is in its origin. The imaginations of the vulgar respecting historical events do not now find their way into national belief, because the cultivation of criticism keeps imagination under control, or limits it to the uneducated; but it was otherwise when no written or monumental history existed, and

[1] The only mode of avoiding this inference respecting the high antiquity of the tradition, is to suppose that the Book of Genesis was written after the Captivity. This is the opinion of Von Bohlen and others, but it appears to me in the highest degree improbable.

the faith of all classes was the same. There is abundant evidence that the past changes of the globe and the fate of the human race, as influenced by them, have excited the imagination to speculate on their cause and circumstances, and that these speculations, assuming an historical form, have been received as matter of fact. The Mexicans believed in four great cycles, the first terminated by famine, the second by fire, from which only birds and two human beings escaped; the third by storms of wind, which only the monkeys escaped; the fourth by water, in which all human beings save two were changed into fishes; and to these cycles they ascribed an united duration of eighteen thousand years.[1] It was a λόγος, a popular legend, among the Greeks, that Thessaly had once been a lake, and that Neptune had opened a passage for the waters through the vale of Tempe.[2] The occupation of the banks of the rivers of this district by the Pelasgic tribes, which must have been subsequent to the opening of the gorge, is the earliest fact in Greek history, and the λόγος itself no doubt originated in a very simple speculation. The sight of a narrow gorge, the

[1] Humboldt, Vue des Cordilleras, 208.

[2] Herod. 7, 129.

sole outlet to the waters of a whole district, naturally suggests the idea of its having once been closed, and as the necessary consequence, the inundation of the whole region which it now serves to drain. The inhabitants of Samothrace[1] had a similar traditionary belief, that the narrow strait by which the Euxine communicates with the Mediterranean was once closed, and that its sudden disruption produced a deluge, which swept the sea-coast of Asia and buried some of their own towns. The fact of traces of the action of water at a higher level in ancient times on these shores is unquestionable; under the name of *raised beaches*, such phænomena are familiar to geologists on many coasts: but that the tradition was produced by speculation on its cause, not by an obscure recollection of its occurrence, is also clear; for it has been shown by physical proofs, that a discharge of the waters of the Euxine would not cause such a deluge as the tradition supposed.[2] It is not necessary that philosophy should have been cultivated among a people, to excite them to speculate upon the causes of remarkable natural appearances. The inhabitants of Polynesia have a tra-

[1] Diod. Sic. 5, 47.

[2] Cuvier, Disc. sur les Revolutions du Globe, ed. 1826, p. 87.

dition that the islands with which their ocean is studded are but the fragments of a continent which once existed. In Greece, where a similar state of things gave rise to a similar hypothesis, the continent of Lyctonia was supposed to have been split into the islands of the Mediterranean.[1] The inhabitants of the western parts of Cornwall have a tradition, as it is called, that the Scilly islands were once united to the mainland, by a tract now submerged.[2] In none of these instances does any historical fact appear to lie at the foundation of the tradition, even where, as in the case last mentioned, it is not in itself improbable. If the tradition of a Deluge is more widely spread than any of these, so are also the phænomena on which it is founded. No part of the world has yet been examined which does not bear marks of having been covered by water; and though some of these facts have only been discovered by modern philosophical research, others must have been obvious from the first moment when man set his foot upon the reclaimed surface. The sand and shells which induced Herodotus[3] to believe that all Lower

[1] Orph. Argon. 1283.

[2] Lyell, Principles of Geology, i. p. 282. See in Inglis, Channel Islands, a similar tradition respecting Jersey, i. 77.

[3] Her. 2, 12.

Egypt, and even the hills above Memphis, had once been covered by the sea, had lain there for ages, before they drew his attention, and surely his was not the first reflecting mind that had speculated on their origin.[1] If few were capable of combining these and similar facts into a tradition which should appear to explain them, many would be ready to receive it when framed, because the imagination and curiosity, even of the vulgar, is excited by such marks of unusual agencies in nature. We know not, indeed, how far the belief of the literary and sacerdotal class, from whom our accounts of the Deluge in various countries are derived, may have corresponded with the popular belief; they are usually found in sacred books, the knowledge of which, if not forbidden to the people, cannot have been much diffused among them. To allege that the time which intervened between the Deluge and the distinct existence of the nations among whom we find the traditional belief in it, was too short for the growth of a speculative explanation, assumes that we have a real chronology of this period. A similar assumption is involved in the objection that man-

[1] If Ovid may be trusted (Met. 15, 259), Pythagoras had deduced from these and similar appearances, a theory not unlike that of modern geology.

kind were too rude and ignorant to occupy themselves in such speculations. It is because we take for granted that a little more than two thousand years before Christ, mankind were reduced to a family of eight persons, that we attribute to times preceding history this incapacity for reflection. That traditions of the destruction of the human race by fire should be comparatively rare, is natural: the marks of the agency of this element, except in the case of active volcanoes, are much less obvious than those of water, and eluded the observation of naturalists, till a very recent period.

The decisive proof, however, that the traditions of the Deluge are rather a very ancient hypothesis, than the reminiscence of a primæval fact, is that they accord not with the phænomena, but with such a partial knowledge, and such conceptions of their cause, as prevailed in ancient times. They explain what is obvious, that water has once covered the summits of the present dry land, but not the equally certain, though less obvious fact, that long intervals of time and a great variety of circumstances must have existed. This want of conformity concludes much more strongly against an historical tradition, than a general and vague conformity in favour of it.

If from these marks of the action of water on the earth, the notion of a Deluge arose, it would not only include, as a necessary consequence, the destruction of all living things, but also the guilt of the race which thus violently perished. No principle appears more universally to pervade the legends of early times, than that great calamities implied great guilt. At Mavalipuram, on the coast of Coromandel, the remains of several ancient temples and other buildings, now close to the sea, suggested the idea that a splendid city had been buried under the waters. Such a calamity must have been inflicted by the gods as a punishment for some enormous crime, and this was found in the impiety of the tyrannical king, the great Bali, who had been outwitted by Vischnu and condemned to hell. According to another account the gods destroyed it, because its magnificence rivalled that of the celestial courts.[1] It was on account of the wickedness of the Atlantians, that Jupiter submerged their island and drowned the whole race.[2] A similar tale is related of an island near China, the impious inhabitants of which thus perished, while their righteous king

[1] Asiat. Res. 2. p. 18. Southey's Kehama, xv.

[2] Plato, Tim. iii. 25. Comp. with Critias, ad fin. iii. 109.

escaped.[1] The remains of buildings, or rocks which fancy has converted into such, seen through the transparent waters near the margin of lakes, have very generally given rise to legends of the destruction of towns for the wickedness of their inhabitants.[2] Dr. Robinson, in his Travels in Palestine, (2. 589,) mentions a tradition that a city had once stood in the desert between Petra and Hebron, the people of which had perished for their vices, and been converted into stone. Seetzen, who went to the spot, found no traces of ruins, but a number of stony concretions resembling in form and size the human head. They had been ignorantly supposed to be petrified heads, and a legend framed to account for their owners suffering so terrible a fate.[3] The old heroic families of Greece had become, or were supposed to have become, extinct; and hence mythology is full of tales of the crimes, by which they had brought on themselves the vengeance of the gods. Troy had perished for the perjury of Laomedon; the Pelopidæ, for the crimes of Atreus

[1] Faber, Pagan Idolatry, 2. 180. quoting Kæmpfer's Japan.

[2] Faber, u. s. p. 176.

[3] In the Transactions of Roy. Soc. Lit. 2, 251, is an account of a similar tradition respecting Berigonium in Argyleshire. The vitrified walls were supposed to bear marks of destruction by lightning, and this was attributed to the wickedness of the inhabitants.

and Tantalus; the royal line of Thebes, for those of Laius and Œdipus; the Phlegyæ, for their sacrilegious invasion of the temple of Delphi. We confine ourselves to historical argument, or we might reasonably inquire whether, when God is said to repent of having made mankind, and to determine to destroy them for their wickedness, we really hear the purposes and motives of the Divine Being declared by himself, or man's imperfect notions, clothed in his own anthropomorphic language.

But the question whether the belief in the existence of a Deluge has originated in speculation, or the preserved remembrance of a fact, can hardly be decided without adverting to chronology. If an authentic chronology connected this event with times and persons unquestionably historical, by an interval so short, that tradition might preserve the knowledge of a fact, the presumption would be that it had been so preserved. We must, therefore, inquire whether we have any chronology on which we can rely. No one but that which is contained in the book of Genesis, has even the appearance of authenticity; others betray themselves at once as the work of invention, by the exaggeration of their numbers or the mythical circumstances interwoven in them. There is,

however, an uncertainty in regard to the biblical text, in all those passages from which we derive the chronology, both of the period between the Creation and the Deluge, and the Deluge and the Birth of Abraham. Hence arise two questions, which must be carefully kept distinct—what is the true reading of the biblical text, and what certainty belongs to the chronology of the primæval times.

There are three principal sources, from which the true text may be recovered; the original Hebrew, the Septuagint version, and the Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch, of which the language is Hebrew, but the text varies considerably from the Jewish copy, not only in the passages in question, but throughout the five books of Moses. The chronology is not reckoned backward or forward, from the Creation or the Deluge, but is deduced from the lives and generations of the Patriarchs, as recorded in the history. According to the Hebrew text, 1656 years intervened between the Creation and the Deluge; according to the Samaritan, 1307; according to the Septuagint, 2262; from the Deluge to the Call of Abraham, is, according to the Hebrew, 427 years; according to the Samaritan, 1077; according to the Septuagint,

1207; so that between the Creation and the Call of Abraham, there elapsed, according to the Hebrew, 2083; according to the Septuagint, 3469 years; making a difference of 1386 years.[1] The Samaritan has found few advocates, but many learned men have preferred the Septuagint to the Hebrew, induced by the inconvenient narrowness of the limits into which the Hebrew chronology compresses the history of the world after the Flood.[2] A critical question, however, must be decided wholly on critical grounds, and unless some reason can be given for suspecting the integrity of the Hebrew text, it claims that superior authority which naturally belongs to an original, above a version. A mere discrepancy in numbers, the most easily corrupted of all the contents of ancient MSS., is not in itself a reason for suspecting bad faith on either side: but in this instance it is of such a kind, as accidental corruption cannot explain. The variation is systematic. The Septuagint regularly adds 100 to the age of the father at the time of the birth of his eldest son, and as

[1] See the different reckonings in Anc. Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 142—148, 252—258.

[2] Isaac Vossius de Antiquitate Mundi. Id. De 70. Interpret. eorumque Chronologia Dissertatio. Jackson's Chronological Antiquities, 3 vols. 4to. Hale's New Analysis of Chronology, 3 vols. 4to.

regularly takes 100 from the length of his life, after that event. It has besides inserted, between Arphaxad and Salah, a second Cainan, to whom 130 years are attributed. These variations show, that the text has been tampered with, and either the Jews have shortened, or the Septuagint has lengthened, all the genealogies.

That the reading of the Hebrew text was the same in the age of the preaching of Christianity as now, is fairly presumed from its correspondence with the Chaldee paraphrase of Onkelos, made in order that the Jews, who had lost the knowledge of the pure Hebrew, might understand the reading of the law. His age is uncertain,[1] but the fidelity of his version, the absence of all fabulous additions, and the purity of his Chaldee idiom, confirm the accounts of the Jewish writers, who place him at the latest in the reign of Hadrian. From this time to the age of St. Jerome, the latter part of the 4th century after Christ, we find no positive statement, in any Jewish or Christian writer, on this subject; but the old Syriac version (Peschito), which must have been made in this interval, agrees with the Hebrew text. St. Jerome, being well skilled in Hebrew, detected and notices[2] the

[1] Eichhorn, Einl. i. § 221. 2. [2] In Genes. op. 3, 320.

discrepancy; but, in his own revision of the old Latin version, which followed the Septuagint, and had been made from it, adheres to the Hebrew. If the Jews, after the preaching of the Gospel, had altered their own text, the copies of the Hebrew would probably have varied among themselves in the age of Jerome, or at least some memorial must have existed of so daring a fraud, and the learned father could not have been ignorant of it. The Hexapla of Origen, lost to us, were extant in his day, and would have informed him, had such a discrepancy existed a century and half earlier. Eusebius, in his Chronicon, notices the difference, but brings no charge of corruption against the Hebrew text. In Chron. Can., p. 87, ed. Scal., he is evidently speaking of chronological discrepancy, in times subsequent to the birth of Jacob. The complaints of such writers as Justin Martyr and Epiphanius, that the Jews had corrupted their scriptures, in order to take away from the Christians the arguments in defence of their faith, would under any circumstances deserve little regard, as they were ignorant of Hebrew. But they never charge them specifically with shortening the patriarchal chronologies; they had in view passages in the Psalms and Prophets, which they

thought the Jews had corrupted; and even as to these, their charge related not to the Hebrew, but to the copies of the Septuagint, which was commonly read in the synagogues of the Hellenizing Jews, instead of the Hebrew or Chaldee. Of the falsehood of the imputation against the Jews, of corrupting the scriptures, we can judge for ourselves; the original text has come to us through their hands, and not a single passage has been altered, which was adduced by Christ and his Apostles as a proof of the divine origin of the Gospel. Aquila made a new version of the Old Testament into Greek, probably with a view to take from the Christians some of the arguments which they derived from the Septuagint; not, however, by any corruption of the text, but a more literal rendering of the Hebrew. The utmost that can be alleged with truth, is, that the Jews point some words differently, to evade the arguments of the Christians. I speak not of particular MSS., but the general testimony of the Hebrew text.

The direct evidence on which they have been charged with corrupting the genealogies is very slight.

Kennicott (Diss. Gen. § 83) quotes a passage attributed to Ephrem Syrus, about A.D. 350, from

an Arabic Catena (MS.) in the Bodleian, (Hunt. 84,) in which it is asserted that the Jews have taken 100 years from the lives of Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahaleel and Enoch, in all 600 years, "ut manifestationem Messiæ celarent, ne libri eorum eos reprehenderent de Messiæ adventu, apparituri post annos 5500, ut liberet hominem." The MS. is of the year 1577, and I have not been able to obtain any more precise information as to the evidence on which this passage is attributed to Ephrem, or the work from which it is quoted. We have a Commentary of Ephrem in the Syriac, on the Book of Genesis, in which he follows the Hebrew reckoning, without intimating any diversity in the Greek. "In celeberrima annorum supputatione, ab orbe condito usque ad diluvium, Hebraicum fontem sequitur Ephræmus, et de Græcæ lectionis diversitate ne verbum quidem facit." Assemann, Bibl. Orient, t. i. p. 65, quoted by Bruns ad Kennicott, § 83. But even if Ephrem really had asserted that the Jews had corrupted the text, we must not too hastily conclude that he possessed anything like a proof of it. It would seem to a zealous partizan the most natural way of accounting for the difference. The Archbishop of

Goa[1] directed the Indian Christians to restore to their copies of the Syriac New Testament, the text of the Heavenly Witnesses, "because it had been suppressed by impiety." What value would any critic attach to this assertion?

Jacobus Edessenus, who flourished about the year 700, makes the charge against the Jews, of having taken 100 years from the age of Adam and the other Patriarchs; but instead of saying, as Kennicott represents, that he had found some Hebrew *copies* which agreed with the Septuagint, what he really says is, that he had found the age of Adam, at the birth of Seth, given at 230 years, "in some accurate Hebrew histories;" on which Bruns observes, "Nullus dubito quin 'Hebraicæ historiæ satis accuratæ,' valde similes fuerint Targumin istorum, quæ hodie nomine Hierosolymitani et Jonathan Ben Uzziel circumferuntur." This he confirms from other passages. The Targum of Jonathan Ben Uzziel was written, according to Bruns, in the 6th century, at least not later.

The expectation of the Jews, according to the Talmud, (Anc. Un. Hist. 3, 39,) was that the Messiah should come when the Law had endured 2000

[1] Porson, Letters to Travis, p. 173.

years. According to the Septuagint Chronology, the birth of Christ fell in the year of the world 5507, but as nothing is said in Scripture as to the interval between this event and the Creation, it does not appear why the Jews should corrupt the text of Genesis, "ut manifestationem Messiæ celarent."

We can see no motive then which should induce the Jews systematically to shorten their own chronology by laying violent hands upon their scriptures; but when we advert to the circumstances under which the Septuagint translation was made, we see obvious reasons why the Jews of Alexandria should have wished to lengthen it. They must have known that the Egyptians claimed an antiquity for their nation and empire, with which the short chronology of the Hebrew Scriptures was quite irreconcileable. Manetho published his Dynasties in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus; and the first version of the Pentateuch was made in the early part of the same reign. But Manetho did not first reveal to the Egyptians the fact of the high antiquity of their history: we know from Herodotus[1] and Plato, that in their times the foundation of the monarchy was carried

[1] Herod. ii. 77.

back for many thousand years. To have placed before the eyes of this people, and of the Greeks, who had adopted their views, a chronology so brief as that of the Hebrew text, would have been a mortifying acknowledgment of inferiority. There was little danger that the liberty taken by the translators should be detected, in an age when few possessed the power of comparing their labour with the original. They might not be conscious of any dishonest purpose; they might believe that a chronology at variance with that of the nation most celebrated for historical knowledge, could not be correct. But even if we must condemn it as a sacrifice of truth to national vanity, there is nothing in the character of the Alexandrian Jews to raise them above such a suspicion. On the contrary, they were adepts in literary forgery, most of the Apocryphal books are with reason attributed to them, and the story of the origin of the Septuagint is an admitted fable.

The Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch agrees with the Hebrew in regard to the first five generations from Adam, but varies in the age attributed to Jared, Methuselah and Lamech, at the births of their respective eldest sons. But in the time of St. Jerome, the Hebrew and the Samaritan

agreed in regard to the two last;[1] and, therefore, the reading of our present copies of the Samaritan must have originated or superseded the other since the 4th century. In the chronology of the post-diluvian Patriarchs, the Samaritan omits Cainan, and follows a different reckoning as to the time which each patriarch survived the birth of his son, but in regard to the father's age, at the time when the son was born, it corresponds with the Septuagint. It is well known that in a multitude of passages of the Pentateuch, the Septuagint and the Samaritan agree, *against* the Hebrew, a phænomenon in respect to the origin of which biblical critics are by no means yet agreed. But the great majority of them bear so strongly the marks of being arbitrary corrections, designed to supply supposed deficiencies, or to rectify supposed mistakes of the Hebrew, that no reliance can be placed on those readings which have the united authority of both of these copies, where any probable motive to an arbitrary change can be suggested. The Hellenizing Jews of Alexandria, and the Samaritans who were established there, were probably not in such hostile relations

[1] Hieron. Quæst. in Gen. v. 3, 4, quoted by Michaelis de Chron. Mos. ante Diluvium, p. 131.

to each other as in Palestine, and their respective copies of the Pentateuch may have been corrected to bring them into harmony.

That the change was made in the chronology at the time of the translation appears probable, from its having been adopted by some writers who lived in the interval between Ptolemy Philadelphus and Josephus, e. g. Demetrius and Eupolemus.[1] No one can read the extracts from these writers, and compare them with the manner in which the real heathens, Diodorus, for example, and Tacitus, speak of the Jews, without perceiving that they are Jews in disguise. This, however, is of no importance to our present argument, since whether heathens or Alexandrian Jews, they would of course employ the Greek translation. Josephus, as he adopts the chronology of the Septuagint, (only omitting the second Cainan, and giving, with the Hebrew, 29 instead of 79 years to Nahor at the birth of Terah,) may be regarded as evidence that the Greek text was in his days nearly what it is at present. But we cannot infer from his adoption of it, either that there was then no difference between the Hebrew and the Septuagint, or that on *critical* grounds he gave the preference to the latter.

[1] Euseb. Præp. Ev. 9, 17. 21. 29. 30.

That he was not wholly ignorant of Hebrew is evident; but whether he understood it so as to read it fluently—above all, whether he wrote from the Hebrew or the Greek—are questions which learned men have answered differently.[1] His own positive assertion, Ant. x. 6, 6, that he only translated the books of the Hebrews, would have had great weight, had he not accompanied it by the declaration, that he had neither added nor taken away anything—whereas it is a notorious fact that he has used great liberties both in adding and suppressing.[2] But whether Josephus could or could not read Hebrew so readily as to detect a difference if it existed between the two texts, it is little likely that he should have proclaimed it. He wrote, not for his own countrymen, but for heathen nations, and his ill-judging patriotism or vanity induced him to soften down and pare away from the authentic records whatever was likely to offend or revolt them. Thus in the history of the Deluge he suppresses the fact, that the Scriptures represent it as destroying all but the family of

[1] Among recent scholars, Ernesti Exerc. Flav. Opusc. 364, and Michaelis Synt. Comm. 165, have decided in favour of the Hebrew scholarship of Josephus. Eichhorn, A. T. 1. 349 note, against it.

[2] He speaks more vaguely, Proem. Ant. i. 2.

Noah. Ant. i. 141. What system of Chronology warranted his assertion, Ant. Proem. i. 3, that Moses was born 2000 years before his own time? Writing in such a spirit of compromise, and with so little regard to truth, is it likely that he would acknowledge, out of respect for the Hebrew verity, that the original records of his nation contained a chronology which the heathens would regard as false, from its inconsistency with their own?

We must then acquiesce in the conclusion, that the Hebrew copies represent the original and authentic text of the book of Genesis. We are not at liberty, in a question purely critical, to give weight to arguments of any other kind than those by which the genuineness of readings in ancient authors is decided. On historical grounds, very formidable objections present themselves to the Hebrew chronology. Without going beyond the history itself, it must appear incredible, that a little more than 400 years after the world was dispeopled by the Flood, Abraham should have found a Pharaoh reigning over the monarchy of Egypt, and that the East, as far as its condition is incidentally disclosed to us, should present no trace of recent desolation, but is already occupied and divided into communities, wherever the patri-

arch moves. The difficulties are still greater when the Mosaic chronology is applied as a measure to profane history. Half a century since, when Manetho passed for an impostor, and Egyptian history was lengthened or shortened, to suit an hypothesis, it was supposed that the thousand years, gained by the substitution of the Greek for the Hebrew numbers, gave ample time for all the events of post-diluvian history, and this is still the refuge of many writers; but this ground is no longer tenable. The Egyptian monuments and records carry us to the beginning of the third millennium before the birth of Christ; and the earliest glimpse we gain of the condition of mankind in this country, exhibits them as already far advanced in civilization, and bearing no marks of so recent an origin from a single family as even the Septuagint chronology supposes. India, China, Assyria, though their histories are not established on evidence as irrefragable as that of Egypt, give similar testimony to the high antiquity of civilization, a condition of society which presupposes a long period of progressive culture.

It is not, however, in these difficulties alone that we find reason for doubting whether the genealogies of the Book of Genesis, taken either according to

the Hebrew or the Septuagint, furnish us with a real chronology and history. The chain which extends from Adam to Abraham is composed of persons whose life is said to have exceeded, sometimes in a tenfold degree, the present average of human life. If we build a chronology on this, we fall again into the fallacy of assuming the supernatural as the proof of the historical. Such a prolongation of human life is a perpetual miracle. It is contrary to all analogy that living beings, *the same in species,* should differ from each other in length of life by several centuries. When a naturalist collects the proofs of identity of species, he does not fail to include conformity in the duration of life. Beings whose lives extended to nearly 1000 years must have been physically, morally and intellectually different from ourselves, whose average does not exceed three score years and ten. They cannot, therefore, have been our progenitors. If, to avoid this difficulty, we suppose that *year* meant some other length of time than twelve months in this part of the history, we cut ourselves off from all possibility of establishing a chronology, the value of its unit being uncertain. If we say that there is some error in the reckoning, we undermine the authority of a document, into

which we admit that so grave an error can have crept.

We have already seen that the accounts of the Creation and the subsequent history of the world, have come down to us in the form of popular tradition, and that consequently we are not to expect in them that accuracy which belongs to a history founded on documentary and monumental evidence. The early chronology of all nations is equally characterized by the influence of popular conceptions. With a feeling akin to the pride of family, they endeavour to deduce their own lineage in direct descent from the *protoplastæ* of the human race. Thus the Hindus attribute the origin of their institutions and race to Menu, whose name is equivalent to *man*. The Germans made Tuisto (Teutsch) and his son Mannus to be the origin and founders of their nation. The Hebrew language has two names for man, *Adam* אדם, and *Enosh* אנש; and accordingly we have a double genealogy of Lamech in Genesis, one tracing him through Methuselah, Enoch, Jared, Mahaleel, and Cainan to Enos; the other through Methusael, Mehujael, Irad, Enoch and Cain to Adam. Ch. iv. 17; v. 9–27. They are virtually the same in their steps, though the orthography is a little varied, and Enoch is transposed. To give primæval antiquity to their

language and institutions, and connect themselves with the origin of all things, by an unbroken chain of chronology, has been an object of ambition to ancient nations; but they have attained this object in different ways. If familiar with the powers of numbers and the cycles of astronomy, as the Chinese, Indians, Egyptians and Mexicans, and surrounded by monuments of hoary antiquity, they compute their own age by thousands and tens of thousands of years, extending beyond all probability the commencement of their history. If, on the contrary, like the Jews, they have no great monuments of former days, no scientific culture, and few and brief historical traditions, they bring down the æra of creation as near as possible to their own times and the shorter series of numbers with which they are familiar. A chronology which rests only on genealogy, even supposing it to be historical, is especially liable to arbitrary contraction; as the whole descent becomes burdensome to the memory, steps are left out, and an artificial compactness is given to the table, sometimes by insertion, but more frequently by omission.[1] Oriental history is wont to shorten genealogical registers in order to help the memory, and

[1] Monumenta antiquissima Historiæ Arabum ed. Eichhorn, § 7, p. 18.

make the great grandfather the immediate parent of the great grandson. This is the practice of the Arabs, and probably also of the Jews. Noah, Gen. v., is made the tenth in descent from Adam; Abraham, Gen. xi., the tenth from Shem. So in the genealogy in Matthew, the three periods from Abraham to David, from David to the Captivity, and from the Captivity to Christ, are made each to comprise fourteen generations. The Greek heroic genealogies ascend by only five, six or seven generations from the war of Troy to the commencement of history.[1] Were we to adopt either the extended or the contracted scale as the authoritative standard, by which all others are to be corrected, we should involve ourselves in endless difficulties, and must either fill out vast spaces with imaginary dynasties, or arbitrarily alter the denominations of time, and reckon years as days, or compress the events of centuries into years.

No evidence, therefore, remains, by which we can fix the interval which elapsed between the

[1] Commonly only *four*. Müller, Orchomenos und die Minyer, p. 137. "Homer's genealogies of his heroes all end in a god, a river, or some unaccountable personage, in the second, third, or at most fourth generation beyond the Trojan war. The royal family of Troy alone forms the exception; Jupiter was ancestor in the seventh degree to Hector."—Mitf. Hist. of Greece, i. 249.

origin of the human race and the commencement of the special history of each nation. They must be allowed to carry out their own chronology as far, but no farther, into this obscure region, as they can produce evidence to justify their claim. This evidence must be, not popular tradition, but documents or monuments; going upward from what is connected, known, and fixed by proximity to the historical times of other nations, to the more broken and doubtful succession of the earliest events. We shall thus be assured that we are dealing with facts, and not with hypotheses, consecrated by antiquity and national belief, and at the same time escape the risk of rejecting true historical evidence, because it cannot be reconciled with an arbitrary standard of credibility.

The consequence of the method which has been commonly adopted, of making the Jewish chronology the bed of Procrustes, to which every other must conform its length, has been, that credence has been refused to histories, such as that of Egypt, resting upon unquestionable documents; and we have voluntarily deprived ourselves of at least a thousand years, which had been redeemed for us from the darkness of ante-historic times.

We may seem thus to be brought to the con-

clusion, that there is not, and cannot be, such a thing as primæval history; and this is true, in the sense in which primæval history is commonly understood. The historian has not the same resources as the geologist. *He,* establishing his own conclusions upon the evidence of his own science, has attained to more than negative results, and has brought to light an order of succession in the formation of the strata of the earth, and the production of vegetables and animals, to which nothing is wanting, to bring it within the designation of history, except some measure of time. But the annals of man are not written in the imperishable records of nature. He must be his own historian. To feel conscious of the relation in which he stands to the past and the future; to devise the means of perpetuating thoughts and events for the instruction of posterity, he must have passed the first stages of social improvement. And, as Time is ever at work to counteract his efforts, crumbling the papyrus and mouldering the inscribed stone, much of his earliest history may have perished from the frailty of the material on which it was recorded.

In denying an historical character to the traditions out of which so many nations have consti-

tuted for themselves a primæval history, we may seem to indulge a spirit of arbitrary and wanton scepticism. To justify us in refusing to them the character even of materials for history, we must direct attention to the wide influence of mythic fiction, in producing what popular belief has accepted as a true narrative of facts.

Though we cannot in any country, except those whose civilization is most recent, fix the exact æra of the use of writing, we can perceive everywhere a period when it was either unknown, or so little used for historical purposes, that fancy had a free range, in ascribing to it what events it pleased. Hence the *ante-historic* period of a nation is also the *mythic*. As applied to the legends of early times, this word must be distinguished from the *fables* which have been devised for the illustration of the maxims of prudence and morality, from the ornaments which poetic imagination and taste bestow on the narrative of facts, by the introduction of supernatural agency, and from the fictions and exaggerations which superstition and credulity introduce into the accounts of even recent and altogether historical events. The *mythi*, which occupy the earliest pages of the history of the principal countries of

the ancient world, differ by one remarkable character from those which we meet with even in historic times; the latter are commonly, though not always, historical in their ground-work; the former relate to a period of which, by supposition, no history had been preserved, and may, therefore, be wholly the work of imagination. Imagination itself, however, has its laws; it requires a motive for its exertion, and the definite form which its productions assume, implies a cause which has given them this shape, rather than any other. Some emotion usually awakens the activity of this faculty; curiosity, national pride and patriotism, religious feeling; and as these states of mind are not solitary, but pervade many bosoms, and even affect a whole nation, many minds are ready to receive the mythic legends with sympathy and faith, and to co-operate in their production. What gives its definite form to the legend thus created is something present to the senses, or permanent in the feelings of those who produce or receive it. But however much, by its vividness or its specialty, it may put on the appearance of reality, it is still essentially imaginative. The problem to be solved is one of fact; the solution, while it appears to be historical, may contain no fact at all.

The error which has so extensively prevailed in regard to these legends, and has procured them credit, as containing the first chapters of primæval and national history, is the opinion that they were produced in or near the age to which they refer, an assumption which cannot be proved in regard to any, and may be disproved of the greater number.

1. The mind acquiesces most reluctantly in the imperfection or interruption of its knowledge of the past, and whatever in the objects or institutions which surround it, or of which it has learnt the existence from history, is of sufficient importance to excite emotions of wonder and curiosity, is accounted for by mythic invention. We have seen this with certainty in the case of the cosmogonies of ancient nations, with probability in their supposed traditions of the flood. The belief in a *golden age*, which we find extensively prevalent, appears, like these, to owe its origin to causes not confined to any one nation, but inherent in human nature, and, therefore, very generally producing similar effects. It is the misery of the age of iron, an age which includes the earliest period of history as truly as our own, which has created the age of gold. The severity of toil, the difficulty of subsistence, the unequal distribution of wealth, the

abuse of power, the injustice of man towards man, and the whole train of evils which flow from the physical condition of humanity and its moral defects, have turned imagination towards a time, when labour was not exacted, because the earth yielded abundance for man's simple wants, and the abuse of civilization had not yet awakened artificial desires; when laws were not needed because crimes were unknown; when everything belonged alike to all, and the gods lived in friendly society with men. This belief has little in common with the scriptural account of the original condition and subsequent fall of man; the change there described is individual and internal, and he is not represented as existing in a social state, without misery or crime. It is at once too widely diffused in its essence, and too distinctly national in its details, to have originated in one spot. The time at which this condition of peace and virtue is supposed to have existed, is separated by so wide a chasm from everything historical, that we cannot believe that any remembrance of it should have been handed down, and in every country is different; we may add, that it is founded upon a false assumption, that a state of inactivity, the result of spontaneous abundance, is more favour-

able to human virtue and happiness, than the obligation to labour. We seek the source of this belief, therefore, in the mind of man himself, which endeavours to obtain relief from actual suffering, in the contemplation of a state in which it was unknown. As imagination passes the bounds of all historic time to create such a condition, so it places beyond the bounds of geographical knowledge, races of men superior in health, longevity and virtue, to the inhabitants of the known parts of the globe. Such were the Atlantians, the Hyperboreans, the Ethiopians. These fictions are beautiful; they prove that imagination has been benevolently given to man, as an antagonist power to the oppressive realities of social life, and that he feels within himself the consciousness of good, which, could it be extricated from the evil with which it is encumbered, would render him worthy to be the associate of divine natures. But we must not seek for the original of these pictures in history or in geography.

2. The nations which have admitted a plurality of gods, have had a theogony as well as a cosmogony, the events of which belong to their mythic age. The connection which they may appear to have with local and historical circumstances is

evidently factitious; for as the personages are imaginary, the events cannot be real. In the more refined and spiritual systems of polytheism, the generation of the gods is little more than a symbolical expression; in the more anthropomorphic, it assumes a nearer resemblance to historic fact, and is adorned with circumstances, having their prototype in human relations. Even in the very anthropomorphic system of the Greeks, there is a portion which at once discloses its merely symbolical character. When it is said that *Ouranos* (Heaven) first ruled over the whole world; that he married *Ghe* (the Earth), and that their offspring were the hundred-handed giants; or that *Oceanos* was the progeny of the same parents; or that *Kronos* (Time) devoured a long succession of his own offspring,—it is evident that nothing real is meant to be described, and that we have merely a philosophical speculation in a transparent allegorical garb. These personages, indeed, though called gods, were hardly objects of general national belief or of divine rites. But the real gods of popular belief, being more frequently presented to the eye under the human form, having their local abodes on earth, and being brought into manifold relations with actual life, were regarded by

the majority of their worshippers as real persons, and their agency was freely intermingled with that of man, in a web of fiction which it is impossible to unravel, so as to separate the mythic from the historic threads. The course which has been commonly pursued, to reject all as fabulous which is supernatural, and admit all as true which is possible, is altogether arbitrary, because fiction may work with natural means, and within the limits of the laws of nature as well as beyond them. More than the possibility of a fact must be established, to authorize its reception as matter of history. The place which these personifications and abstractions hold in the Greek mythology, shows that we cannot even trust to it as an historical deduction of the progress of theological belief. The real objects of the national faith in the earliest ages to which we can ascend, Jupiter and his kindred, appear as the latest in the order of theogony. But there is no reason to believe that the worship of another line of gods preceded that of the descendants of Saturn. On the contrary, Ouranos and his children appear to be entirely the result of later speculation, and to have been placed at the head of the theogony, in order to fill up the chasm and connect the existing deities with the

origin of Heaven and Earth. The very forms of their names betray the late date of the mythos; they are ordinary Greek; while those of the descendants of Saturn, though also of Greek root, can be explained in general only from obsolete and dialectic forms. In regard to other mythologies, as the Indian and the Egyptian, in which deities of a more spiritual character appear, in the order of theogony, to precede those who come nearer to humanity in their form, their passions and their history, we may reasonably conclude that they result from later refinement. Such is the distinction between *Braam* and *Brama*, in the Hindu theology.[1] Their apparent spirituality is really their imperfect personification, itself the consequence of their not having been objects of popular belief, nor creations of the popular mind.

3. The mythology of several ancient nations, represents the dominion of the gods as not having been established, without struggles with powerful enemies, by whom they even suffered partial and temporary defeat. The general idea which such mythi embody, is derived partly from the conflicting forces which are still active in nature, and appear to have possessed even greater energy in

[1] Moor, Hindu Pantheon, p. 3.

primæval times, partly from the mixture of evil with good, which pervades nature, providence and human life. In the Greek mythology, in which a moral element seldom appears, the conflict of the gods with the Titans, denotes merely the slow and reluctant submission of the vast and turbulent powers of nature, to those laws by which the actual system is preserved in harmony and order. The giants, who endeavoured to storm heaven, and were buried in the Phlegræan fields, in the Pallenian peninsula, or under Mount Ætna, represent specifically the violent disturbance which volcanic agency introduces. The Egyptian Typhon combines physical and moral evil; so does the Ahriman of the Zoroastrian mythology. The Hindus have no such distinct and single personification of the principle of evil; but their preserving god Vischnu becomes incarnate at intervals, when either moral or physical evil is likely to predominate. These fictions show, not only that man has been universally conscious of the mixed influences to which he is subject, but also of the preponderance of the good. The Titans have been cast down and imprisoned in Tartarus; Typhocus turns under the weight of Ætna, but cannot throw it off. Typhon has been vanquished by Horus, and

buried in the Serbonian bog. Ahriman still continues the contest with Ormuzd, but the power of the evil principle has been already limited, and will be ultimately overthrown.

The fiction of a race of giants, engaged in warfare with the gods, is so remote from all historical probability, that its true nature is at once seen; but it may be thought that there is something of an historical foundation for the very prevalent belief, that a race, of stature, strength and longevity far surpassing that of later degenerate days, has once occupied the earth, and even left on it the traces of its existence in its mighty works. We by no means deny the possibility that such a race may have existed, but analogy does not favour the supposition, and the direct evidence will be found to be fallacious. We discover among fossil remains, those of animals congenerous with such as now exist, far surpassing them in size, but seldom, if ever, identical with them in all other respects, except their size. Their species is different, and therefore analogy is against the conclusion that the human race has ever varied, except within the limits of existing varieties; varieties which include Patagonians and Esquimeaux. The supposed remains of gigantic human

bones, which afford to popular credulity an argument of their former existence, when examined, prove to be those of cetaceous animals, or elephants; the traditions which ascribe great works to them are only proofs how completely the remembrance of their real origin has been lost. Looking upward from the base of the Great Pyramid, we might suppose it the work of giants; but it is entered by passages, admitting with difficulty a man of the present size, and we find in the centre a sarcophagus about six feet long. The strength and stature of the men of past ages have been exaggerated, from the same cause as their happiness and their virtue, and each successive generation has regarded itself as holding a middle position between the highest and the lowest points of the scale. Two men of Homer's day could have lifted with difficulty the stones which the heroes of the Trojan War hurled at each other with ease.[1] Virgil anticipated that the bones of those who fell in the Civil Wars, when disinterred by posterity, would be gazed at with wonder for their size.[2]

4. Religious rites, from their connection with the most solemn ideas which can occupy the human mind, their supposed influence on the

[1] Il. E. 302. [2] Georg. 1, 497.

happiness of those who perform them, and the high antiquity in which their origin is commonly lost, have powerfully excited imagination, and many mythic legends have been devised to explain their origin and circumstances. They have, no doubt, sometimes had an historic origin. For the Jewish Passover, we have a cause assigned in the deliverance from Egypt, an event belonging to an historic age; and it is incredible that a whole nation should have been in error, in regard to a transaction which so deeply affected them.[1] But if we examine the majority of those legends which are connected with the foundations of temples, the institution of solemn rites and public festivities, we shall find that they have much more the air of being devised to explain certain peculiarities, which had excited wonder and curiosity, than of having been handed down, side by side with the practices themselves. At the temple of Papremis, in Egypt, dedicated to Mars, it was customary, on one evening of the year, that the votaries of the god should force an entrance for his shrine and statue into the sanctuary, and that the priests

[1] The circumstance mentioned in Gen. xxxii. 32, is a remarkable contrast to this. So are the various accounts of the appointment of circumcision, (Gen. xvii. 9; Exod. iv. 24,) which was not an exclusively Jewish rite.

should resist; and lives were lost, as Herodotus relates,[1] in the sanguinary affray which ensued; symbolical, as it should seem, of the warlike attributes of the god. The ἱερὸς λόγος of the temple represented it as originating in the endeavour of Mars to force his way to an interview with his mother, and the resistance of the priests, to whom he was unknown. The Eleusinian festival exhibited a singular mixture of mournful rites with the most unbridled licentiousness of the tongue and gesture, not unnatural, as both death and life, joy and sorrow, the apparent destruction of the seed in winter and its germination in the spring, were symbolized in these mysteries. The sacred legend of the place referred the custom to the coarse pleasantries with which a woman had dissipated the grief of the goddess, when she had arrived at Eleusis, seeking her lost daughter. The Syrians abstained from fish, probably from dietetic motives, but their abstinence was explained by a legend of the conversion of their great goddess into a fish.[2] Such explanations, as they assume the existence of personages whom we know to be

[1] Her. 2, 63.

[2] Scilicet in piscem sese Cytherea novavit, Quum Babyloniacas summersa profugit in undas, Anguipedem alatis humeris Typhona furentem. Manil. Astron. iv. 580. Comp. Tzetz. Chil. 275.

fictitious, will not now be received as history; but fiction, though it finds a clearer field in ages of which no history existed, avails itself also of the obscurity of periods within historical limits. The builder of the third pyramid, Mycerinus or Menkare, is an historical personage, but his age was as obscure to the Greek interpreters and the Egyptians generally in the time of Herodotus, as if he had been wholly mythic. Hence a legend had been invented, to account for one of the ceremonies of the worship of Isis, and related as an historical anecdote of him and his daughter.[1]

5. Extraordinary appearances in nature excite wonder and curiosity; if they are of a transient kind, momentary supernatural agency is called in to explain them; if permanent, a mythic legend usually attaches itself to them. A fetid scum was occasionally thrown up on the shores of Sicily, which was explained as the consequence of the Sun's stabling his horses in those Western regions.[2] But the same legend had a more historic form; transferred to the Peloponnesus, Augeas (αὐγή) the son of the Sun was substituted for the Sun himself, and the cleansing of the stable was deemed a labour worthy of Hercules.[3] The rocks of Sipylus

[1] Herod. 2, 130. [2] Sen. Nat. Quest. 3, 26. [3] Apollod. 2, 5

bore a fantastic resemblance to a weeping woman; Niobe was said to have been converted into stone.[1] A well in the Acropolis of Athens had an unseen communication with the sea, and furnished salt water; it was supposed to have been produced by Neptune, who having the epithet of Erechtheus, (or the *shaker,*) it was also attributed to an ancient king of that name.[2] The river which ran by Byblos into the sea, assumed, in summer, the appearance of being stained with blood, owing to a stratum of red earth, found in Libanus, which the winds, at that season, carried in large quantities into the stream; the legends of the country attributed the phænomenon to the wound of the god Adonis.[3] The habits or forms of animals, if they presented anything uncommon to excite the fancy, gave rise to mythic explanations. The tinge of red on the swallow's breast was explained as the bloody trace of the murder of Itys;[4] as the Mahometans explain the red legs of the pigeon, from the mud which remained on them, when the dove was sent forth from the ark. In short, there is nothing of an unusual kind, even the existence of a tree, the growth of unknown centuries, which,

[1] Pausanias, 1, 21.
[2] Pausanias, 1, 26.
[3] Luc. D. Syr. 8. op. 9, 91.
[4] Ovid, Met. 6, 668.

to a people of lively imagination, does not serve as the material of a mythic legend. Most of them are of so romantic a cast, that their fictitious origin is evident at once; others approaching more to an historical character, have been admitted as having at least a foundation in fact. But they usually betray themselves. The fifth labour of Hercules, for example, if treated as entirely the work of fancy, beyond the natural appearance which gave rise to it, may not appear a very graceful fiction; but belonging wholly to the imagination and to supernatural beings, we seek for no congruity or proportion in it. But how absurd does it become, if received as the history of the labour of an ancient Grecian hero, in cleansing the stable of a neighbouring king!

6. Another cause which has filled the ante-historic age with mythic tales, is the desire to explain the transmission of national customs, religious dogmas and rites from one country to another. The historical events which caused the strong resemblances in these points, which we find, between Greece, Asia Minor, Phœnicia, Egypt, and even India, are as little known as those which caused the affinities of language, nor is every resemblance

a proof of transmission. But in ancient times it was assumed that transmission was the cause, nor was it enough that this transmission should be referred to unknown ages and persons; definite names and circumstances were necessary, to satisfy the propensity of the mind, rather to cheat itself with fiction, than acquiesce in entire ignorance, or the bare knowledge of a general fact. No nation carried this further than the Greeks, who, while they received everything from foreigners, wished to appear as the authors of all they had borrowed. Their Hercules had gone to Lydia, to Phœnicia, to Egypt, to Libya, to Gades, wherever his worship was found established. Their Bacchus had led his train, or carried his conquests, wherever a god was adored with frantic orgies and phallic rites, or wherever a Nysa was found. Their Io had been carried to Phœnicia, and been placed at the head of the Egyptian Pantheon, under the name of Isis. These legends long passed for history; but they were too repugnant to established facts, respecting the relative antiquity of the Greek religion and those of the East, to retain this authority. The same principle of explanation, however, has wrought by less obvious methods; and much that

is still received as history, already begins to appear as mythic, as the wanderings of Io, or the Indian expedition of the Theban Bacchus.

7. The origin of society, the establishment of law, the invention of the arts, like the origin of the world, eluded historical research, and mythology was called in to supply the deficiency. The learned work of Goguet,[1] in which are collected all the traditions which the ancients have left us on these subjects, affords ample proof of their uncertainty. We know what nations excelled and preceded others in civilization; but when we attempt to go beyond these general facts, and assign institutions, usages and arts to definite persons and dates, we perceive directly that there is no historical evidence. Custom ripens into law, law is invested with the sanction of religion, art advances by imperceptible degrees from rudeness to perfection, and all these changes have taken place before any historian is in being to record them. If customs and laws are in accordance with the ordinary practice of mankind, and dictated by public benefit, they are attributed to human legislation. If apparently repugnant to these, a mythic origin is assigned to them, as the Egyptians referred their

[1] Origin of Laws, Arts and Sciences, 3 vols. Eng. Transl. 1775.

intermarriage of brothers and sisters to the union of Isis and Osiris.[1] Etymology often shows us that the supposed name of the inventor is only a personal expression of the fact of the invention. The name of Jubal denotes a musical sound; that of Tubal-cain, an artificer in brass. The Νώροπες, to whom the first working in brass is ascribed, (Clem. Strom. 307,) have been fixed upon, because νῶροψ (Hom. Il. β′. 578, et passim,) is an epithet of that metal. The art of grinding was said to have been first found out at Alesiæ, (ἀλέσαι, to grind,) in the Peloponnesus, by Myles, (μύλη, a millstone,) son of Lelex. Dædalus signifies the *skilful*; Prometheus, the *ingenious*. Each nation seeks to appropriate the glory of these inventions to itself; and those which are known to have been indebted to others for their civilization, are not the most backward in claiming originality. If we believe the Greeks,[2] the use of fire, of grain, the art of making bread, the establishment of laws, the institution of marriage, metallurgy, the fabrication of tools, shipbuilding, navigation, medicine, astronomy, were all invented by their gods or the forefathers of their race, and within the limits of their country. Their fictions had a fictitious con-

[1] Diod. 1, 27.

[2] Goguet, 1, 159.

gruity, and even probability; they did not ascribe these wonders to ordinary men, but to demigods and heroes, of whose powers, either of mind or body, those of ordinary humanity furnished no standard; they believed themselves to be the *autochthones* of the soil, on which they had lived from the origin of all things, and therefore naturally presumed that the whole history of the human race, in its successive stages of civilization, was included in their own. Had they lived in a state of insulation from the rest of the world, we might have admitted their claim to these inventions, although it would still have been obvious, that the whole history and chronology of their introduction was fictitious. But Greece was separated from Asia, where the arts were of immemorial antiquity, by a strait not wider than an æstuary; it was visited by the fleets of the Phœnicians, and therefore no one, with whom national pride does not supersede all evidence, can admit that any of these inventions were really made by the Greeks. But can we place more confidence in Phœnician legends,[1] when they tell us that Ousous first taught men to use the skins of beasts for clothing, and ventured to sea in a wooden canoe; that Chrysor

[1] Sanchoniathon ap. Euseb. Præp. Evang. 1, 10.

invented rafts and fishing-tackle; the Cabiri, navigation; Dagon, agriculture; Technites and Autochthon, the art of brickmaking; Cronos, weapons of iron? Or have the Babylonians more claim to be believed, when they represent their progenitors as living on the spontaneous productions of the land and the marsh, till Oannes appeared and taught them every thing that pertained to civilized life?[1] Or are we to receive as history the Egyptian account of Osiris,[2] who, with his wife Isis, introduces the use of grain and the culture of the vine, and travels over the world, to communicate to its inhabitants the blessings of civilization? Even if no names are assigned, and no supernatural agency is introduced, this does not alter the unreal character of the legend. The *speculation* of Lucretius, (v. 1255,) that the first smelting of metals was the result of an accidental conflagration among the mountains, was a *mythos,* (Strabo. 3. p. 147,) in regard to the mountains of Iberia. These various traditions neutralize each other; and leave us only the conclusion, that the real origin of all these arts and institutions, the names of their inventors, and the circumstances of their introduction to the world,

[1] Euseb. Chron. p. 6. ed. Scol. [2] Diodorus, 1, 17, 18.

were as unknown in the earliest times of historical composition, as they are in our own.

It might be expected that this ignorance would cease with the establishment of civilized communities, and that though the general history of mankind was lost, each nation had preserved, free from mythological mixture, the time and manner of its own origin, and the names and deeds of its own early kings and legislators. Yet such an instantaneous transition from fiction to history, from uncertainty to certainty, is not in itself probable, nor is it at all accordant with the character of the earliest special histories. The names which they contain, sometimes appear to have been derived from the name of the nation itself, as the Pelasgus, Ion, Dorus, Æolus, Hellen of the Greeks, who represent the names of the different tribes of Greece; or from the names of the capital cities of monarchies, as the Egyptian Menes is supposed to have founded Memphis; Ninus, Nineveh; and Romulus, Rome; or from a river or a mountain in its neighbourhood. The principal god of the mythology of the country sometimes appears as an historical personage in the obscure commencement of history; thus Bel, the chief god of Phœnicia and Assyria, has been

converted into a king, Belus; and Semiramis is probably nothing else than an historical metamorphosis of the great Syrian goddess Derceto.[1] States appear to have slowly consolidated themselves, and the true history of their progress was either never recorded, or had been lost before curiosity was awakened to inquire into it. Cities were formed by the gradual aggregation of dwellings, and had either no founder, in the sense in which we apply that name to Alexander and Constantine, or had existed so long, in progressive stages, before a founder was inquired about, that no trace of him was preserved. In such a state of ignorance, to suppose a founder, whose name resembled that of the city, was a most obvious resource. It may be that in the age when the belief originated, such a practice was not without example; but the mere allegation of the founder's name, unless the circumstances of the supposed foundation have an historical character, does not warrant the belief in his existence. The gods of those nations whose worship was anthropomorphic, had been so completely invested with a human form, attributes and history, that it was

[1] Transactions of the Lit. and Philos. Soc. of Manchester, vol. iii. 2nd Series.

almost a necessary consequence that they should be supposed, at last, to have once been human beings; and if so, who should have been more worthy of elevation to divinity, than the founder of the city or the kingdom, the warrior under whom their progenitors had conquered, or the chief who had led them to the country which they occupied? Thus while the fact was, that the god had been brought down to the character of a mortal founder or chief, the mortal was supposed to have been raised to the rank of deity for his eminent services. If an epithet of the god, from its antique form, or obsolete root, lost its primary significance, it often happened, that he entered the list of kings or heroes, entirely in an historical character; or else remained, under his familiar appellation, in the council of the gods, while the unknown epithet furnished a king to the national annals. Thus, even when we have reached the historic age, the shadowy personages of mythology are still intermingled with its realities.

The mythic age is no definite period; it has no chronology, except what has been given to it by those who, mistaking it for history, have endeavoured by arbitrary means to distribute its events in a probable succession, and connect them with

the historic age. From the circumstances of its creation, it is always referred to the earliest time at which a nation believes itself to have existed, but the mythic age of one country may fall within the historical times of another. The sovereigns of Egypt had raised monuments and inscribed them with representations of their exploits, and the chronology of their reigns, while Greece, according to its own mythology, was still peopled by demigods, and miracles were events of every day. From the Dorian Conquest downwards, Greece has a history; from the middle of the 8th century before Christ, a chronology; but even at the æra of the Olympiads, all is mythic legend in the history of Rome. Odin, according to Northern mythology, was leading his hosts from Asia to Scandinavia, and displaying the united attributes of a god, a warrior and a magician, at a time when the great men of Rome had learnt to treat Jupiter as a fable. It is fruitless labour to endeavour to establish synchronisms between mythic and mythic, or mythic and historic times, to assign Danaus and Cadmus their place in the royal families of Egypt and Phœnicia; to accommodate the foundation of Rome to the capture of Troy, or settle what proconsul, by his Asiatic vic-

tories, drove Odin and his Ases into Scandinavia. Learning, acuteness, invention, mathematical skill, have been employed for ages in this task, but with no other result than to prove that what is fictitious in its origin, can never be brought into permanent union with history. Broken fragments may be reunited and restored; even a quicksand may be made to support a solid edifice; but who can give a foundation to a castle in the air?

We cannot, therefore, adopt the old division of past time into the *uncertain*, the *mythic* and the *historic*,[1] as comprehending three distinct and successive stages. In Egypt, for example, the historical period begins with Menes; all that precedes it, belongs to the uncertain. The people must have existed previously, and must have had a history, but all its events are to us uncertain, though we may hope, by probable inferences from language, &c., to recover some general facts respecting them. But the mythic period, the reign of gods and demigods, is altogether imaginary, and it is only an arbitrary interpretation which would give it an historical character, as if it denoted the ascendancy of the priests. The reason why a mythic period so commonly precedes the historic,

[1] Varro ap. Aug. Civ. Dei, 18, 10.

is, that the questions which mythology employs itself in solving, often relate to matters really antecedent to history, and that its fictions would be too rudely encountered by facts, if not placed in a period of which no facts are recorded.

The belief in the reality of mythic times and persons has so long held possession of the mind, that it acquiesces with great reluctance in conclusions which deprive us of so much that we have been accustomed to regard as at least substantially true. But though we cannot make mythic legends into history, there is much historical knowledge to be gained from them, when we have once seized the true point of view from which they are to be considered. They are proofs of the existence of a certain popular belief, and the circumstances which gave rise to it may be historical, though not the story in which it has been embodied. We may discard from our minds all belief in the personality and adventures of Cadmus; there will still remain the fact, that the Greeks believed themselves to owe some of their gods and their civilization to Phœnicia; and this belief could not have arisen, had there not been strong marks of affinity between their arts and religion, and deep traces of an early intercourse. Æneas and his

adventures, whether in Troy, in Libya, or in Italy, may be wholly mythic; and yet the fact will remain, that those who framed the legend of his migration, saw resemblances which led them to ascribe an Æolic origin to the Palladium and the Penates. When the Greeks made Dorus and Æolus the sons of Hellen, Achæus and Ion his grandsons, they were influenced by the fact, that all the Hellenes were closely united in religion, manners and language, but that the Æolian and Dorian tribes had more of the rudeness of primitive antiquity than the Achæans and Ionians. If there be no reason to suppose that the belief of the Scandinavians in their own Asiatic origin, was an etymological inference from the name of Ases, or subsequent to their knowledge of the scriptural accounts of the diffusion of mankind, its existence would be a fact of great historical value, though Odin should be classed with purely mythic personages. The walls of Tiryns and Argos might have been justly concluded to be of colossal architecture and unknown antiquity, from the legend which ascribed them to the Cyclops, had no vestige of them remained. And when it is added, that these gigantic artificers came from Lycia, we learn not the fact of the builders having really

migrated thence, but of the acknowledged priority of the Asiatic country in the cultivation of art, perhaps of early colonization.[1] These are properly historical inferences; but the use of mythology, rightly understood, to the historian, is not confined to these. As a product rather of the national than the individual mind, it gives a vivid image of national character. Religious and moral feeling, knowledge, taste, the predominance of plastic or reflective power among the intellectual faculties, in ages from which no literary works have descended to us, may all be traced in the creations of mythology; and for this true picture of the people with whom they originated, we may well resign that delusive appearance of history, which is obtained by stripping away from them what is supernatural and absurd.

If we thus abandon all hope of extracting from tradition, or deducing from written records, those precise dates, facts and localities which alone could constitute a *history* of primæval times, nothing would seem to be left, but to receive the existence of the great oriental monarchies with which special history begins, as facts, the consequences of which we have to develop, without speculation on their

[1] Eur. Or. 963. Paus. 2, 25. Strab. 8. 572. Apollod. 2, 2.

causes. But the history of Man is the result of his moral, intellectual and physical being, and the influences to which he has been subjected by his relation to the system of Nature, of which he forms a part. To contemplate these relations is, therefore, to qualify ourselves for understanding his history. Further, in those great monarchies whose connection with the earliest movements and combinations of the human race we believe to be irrecoverably lost, we find an agreement in certain remarkable characters, the origin of which is reasonably sought in some general principles of our common nature; since the special circumstances of country and race under which they appear, are too various to admit of our attributing the cause to them. What has been commonly called *conjectural* history, has been unsatisfactory, because it has proceeded upon unproved assumptions respecting the primitive condition of mankind, and has been carried out by means of doubtful analogies. But if we assume nothing except the facts which constitute our earliest historical knowledge, and seek to explain them from the faculties and affections of man, which in all ages are the same, we shall approach as nearly to a knowledge of primæval history, as we can do in the entire

absence of positive testimony. To these two inquiries, the remaining pages of this Essay will be devoted.

The relations of Man to Nature are such as to show that he has been *adapted* by his Creator to the place which he occupies; they harmonize with his powers and functions, and tend to the preservation of his own race, and of the other animated beings who are joined with him in the possession of the earth.[1] This harmony and adaptation are seen even in the laws which our globe obeys, as a portion of the solar system. If man could have existed at all, in a planet receiving so small a portion of heat from the Sun, or revolving around him in so long a period as Jupiter or Saturn, the development of his nature, under such different influences, must have produced a series of events wholly unlike his actual history.[2] Even the special phænomena of this history are connected with the cosmical relations of the earth. A slight change in the obliquity of its axis, and the consequent position of the tropics, would have placed Ethiopia beyond, or Nubia and Egypt within, the range of the annual rains. In the former case,

[1] Paley, Nat. Theol. Ch. 17. vii.

[2] Herder Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte, i. 7.

there would have been little or no deposit of fertilizing soil along the course of the Nile, and the whole history of civilization in the Western half of the globe would have been changed. On the other hand, had Egypt been subject to those violent alternations of drought and moisture which belong to a tropical climate, its monuments must have perished before they had received their interpretation. If the Gulf Stream had not wafted the productions of America to the limits[1] of Europe, Columbus might never have discovered the existence of a western continent.

The influence of physical causes on the condition of man increases, as he is brought into nearer connection with them, in the structure of the globe, the surface of which has been the theatre of his history. The form of the ocean, and the distribution of the two elements of land and water, have promoted or retarded the diffusion of the human race, and their arts and knowledge. Seas of limited extent, like the Mediterranean and the Ægean, the Arabian and Persian Gulfs, have facilitated the early intercourse of mankind: oceans, like the Southern Pacific or Atlantic, have presented a barrier which only scientific navigation

[1] Robertson's America, Book i.

could pass. Had the earth lain, according to the early conception of it, a round disk in the midst of the waters,[1] its immense continent would probably have exhibited the same monotony and uniformity of life which now pervades Central Asia and Africa. Had it been entirely broken up into islands, the march of conquest and the great combinations of empire would have been prevented.

A great change either in the proportion or the distribution of land and water on the surface of the terraqueous globe, must have produced a change in the events of human history. If Asia had been joined to Europe and Africa only in the arctic and torrid zones, and elsewhere been separated by a broad sea, without islands to serve as stepping stones, ages might have passed away, and civilization might still have been confined to the region in which it originated.

If the strata, of which the covering of our globe consists, had remained in their original horizontal position, instead of a surface varying in height from the level of the sea to mountains of 25,000 feet, man would have dwelt amidst boundless plains, without those natural barriers and marked

[1] Ukert, Geographie der Griechen und Römer, i. 2. p. 6.

divisions which have given variety both to his race and his history.

The direction and composition of the mountain chains which, pushed from below by an internal force, now diversify the surface of the earth, has shaped the course of the rivers, on whose banks we find the earliest seats of ancient civilization. Climate, with its manifold influences both on the physical and the intellectual frame of man, and the mode of his subsistence, is determined, not merely by latitude, but by the respective elevation of different countries and their vicinity to the sea, by which temperature is equalized. "How entirely," says Humboldt, "would the temperature of the earth have been changed, and along with it the condition of vegetation, of agriculture and of human society, if the longer axis of the New Continent had had the same direction with that of the old; if the chain of the Andes had risen up from east to west; if no tropical continent, like Africa, radiating heat from its surface, had lain to the south of Europe; if the Mediterranean, which was once connected with the Caspian and the Red Sea, had not existed, and its bottom had been raised to an equal height with the plains of Lom-

bardy and the Cyrenaica!"[1] The variety of the internal structure of the globe, as manifested at its surface by the revolutions of past ages, or discovered by man's own research, is a most important element among the circumstances which have determined his condition and history. He has been enabled to vary his mode of life according to the productions of each soil, and from these differences in his mode of subsistence, other differences in manners, government and religion have flowed. The adaptation of the earth to the residence of man, is nowhere more manifest. In the productions which its strata present, we see provision made for his well-being, even when nothing indicated that he was designed to be called into existence. The precious metals, which have become the instrument of his civilization, are deposited in the clefts of one formation; the coal and ironstone from which his tools, machinery and weapons are fashioned, lie imbedded in another; the materials of sculpture and architecture in a third. Even the variety produced in the aspect and vegetable clothing of the earth, by this arrangement of the

[1] Cosmos, p. 312. Germ. The same author points out how the increase of cold, in travelling eastward through Europe, on the same parallel of latitude, is owing to increased remoteness of the tempering sea, p. 351.

strata of which it is composed, has contributed, by its influence on the imagination and taste, to develop the different powers of the mind, and diversify national character.

We learn from the study of the remains of extinct animals, which the interior of the earth has preserved, that man is the most perfect degree of a long gradation of organized beings, many portions of which have perished, and been replaced by others of a higher type, during a succession of ages, whose united or even single duration, science does not venture to guess. The rocks which we reach when we penetrate to the greatest depth, have assumed their actual form under the agency of fire as well as water; and as fire destroys, while water preserves, the traces of life, we cannot conclude with certainty that no life, animal or vegetable, preceded the formation of the rocks which immediately rest upon granite. The lowest of the sedimentary rocks are destitute of organic remains, except the tribe of *fuci*. When animals begin to appear, they are of a lower order in creation, and less varied forms, than those with which the earth and the waters are now filled; and it is generally, though not universally, true, that an ascending scale of life prevails as we ap-

proach the time when the present surface of the globe emerged from the sea.[1] The gradations of this scale are more distinctly seen, from the point at which vertebrated animals make their first appearance in the form of fishes. We know not the circumstances under which these successive races were brought into being, or became extinct. There is no reason to conclude that they were extinguished by sudden and simultaneous catastrophes, throughout the whole space which their remains occupy, and succeeded by new and instantaneous creations. The condition in which they are found, renders this probable in particular circumstances, but not as an universal fact or a general law; since some species disappear, simultaneously with a great change in the composition of the strata, while others run on, and only gradually vanish. Each of the changes in the condition of the earth, the waters and the atmosphere, which constitute the physical history of our planet, appears to have been attended with changes more or less extensive in the forms and habits of the living tribes which peopled them. The same remark applies to vegetable life, the remains of which, in the latest of the tertiary strata, bear the

[1] Phillips' Geology, 1, 128. 97.

nearest resemblance to that which now covers the surface of the globe. As its condition approached to that under which the human race now lives, and chemical, electrical and magnetic forces reached that state of equipoise which makes their agency preservative and not destructive, animal life became more varied, more abundant and more analogous to that of man. It may be a law of Nature, that the altered condition of the elements shall be slowly followed by changes of organs and structure which at length amount to specific or even generic differences; or it may have been the order of creative operation, to bring into being new races, whenever the earth, in its progress from its primæval to its present state, was prepared generally or partially to receive and preserve them. On either supposition, the correspondence between the world and its inhabitants, at any given period, is the result of adaptation; either equally excludes the absurdity of self-production. The question cannot be decided by historical evidence, but this, as far as it goes, is unfavourable to the supposition that Nature gradually exchanges one species for another. We trace nothing like a waste of power in abortive attempts to produce new forms, subsequently abandoned from their unsuitableness. We see in

the present order of things, no tendency to the production of new species, nor to the extinction of the old except by violent causes. Since the commencement of history, man appears to have been surrounded in his domestic circle, by the same groupe of animals, subdued to his service, and beyond it, by the same hostile inhabitants of the forest and the desert. This law of permanence, as far as we can judge, belongs also to the vegetable world. We may observe too, as an example of the *adaptation* of man to the circumstances in which he was placed upon the earth, that it appears to have been inhabited, in a period not long preceding that of his creation, by animals of the same general character as those now found upon it, but much surpassing them in size and power. Unassisted by the resources of art, he would have been little fitted to cope with such animals as the hyænas of the cave of Kirkdale, and the other huge *carnivora,* whose fossil bones remain, or even the stag of the Irish bogs.

There is a wide difference of opinion among natural philosophers, as to the causes which have produced the past revolutions of the globe. While some regard them as the effect of agencies once infinitely more energetic than they are at present,

to others they seem capable of being explained by means still in operation. That in geological, as distinguished from historical, times, there was nothing like a gradual decline of that internal force by which our continents were raised, is clear, from the circumstance, that both the Alps and the Andes have been elevated *through* very recent strata. The changes which it has undergone, since man became its inhabitant, appear, however, to be entirely explicable by existing causes. We find no remains of human beings, or the domestic animals, buried among the vegetable and animal productions, which attest the former prevalence of a tropical heat, far northward in the temperate zone. We never find them imbedded in strata which have been elevated since their consolidation beneath the water, nor associated with extinct species, nor even amidst superficial accumulations, which the present forces of nature, acting in their present manner, are not sufficient to explain. We can thus assign with probability the geological æra of man's appearance on the earth; he is contemporaneous with its most recent state, and a portion of a system of organized beings, which, as far as we can see, is permanent in its existing forms. This is the only kind of chro-

nology which can be applied to such a case. The absolute age of the world, reckoned backward in years from some historical epoch, can never be assigned, because its formation has been progressive, and we have not even an approximate measurement of the time which each stage has occupied. We cannot fix in years the commencement of that stage which we have called the most recent, and to which man belongs. We know that an infinite time has not elapsed, since the fragments of the mountain began to accumulate themselves in a slope around its base, the æstuary and the lake to be filled by the deposit of the streams which flow into them, or the cataract to wear away the face of the rock over which it is precipitated; but in no single case are we sufficiently acquainted with the laws which regulate these changes, to calculate the time required to produce the whole existing effect. It is not probable, indeed, that on every part of the earth's surface, these changes began simultaneously. As far as any estimate can be formed,[1] the time necessary to produce

[1] Cuvier (Theory of the Earth, Eng. Tr. p. 133) and De Luc (Geological Travels, *passim*) have collected many facts of this kind, for the purpose of supporting the common chronology of the Deluge; but they are unsatisfactory, from the causes mentioned in the text, and might be met by many of an opposite tendency.

them would much exceed the utmost limits of our common chronology of the history of man.

He thus appears to have been placed upon the earth when it had reached such a state, that he was able, by means of his instincts and faculties, to preserve and improve his being. The capacity of self-preservation by means of instinct, belongs to all animated species; that of self-improvement, to man alone. It is the *altè terminus hærens* which for ever separates him from the most highly organized order of inferior animals, and it is this alone which gives him a history. But as we can assign no absolute date to his introduction into the world, nor even decide with confidence whether this took place by simultaneous or successive acts of creative power, so it is impossible to define the time which he occupied in advancing from his primæval condition to that in which he appears at the commencement of history.

The same feeling which induced the Roman poet to assign the creation of the human race to spring,[1] leads us to Asia as the cradle in which their infancy was fostered. Its temperate climate and fertile soil were best adapted to their preservation and increase, when they were not yet pos-

[1] Virg. Georg. 2, 335.

sessed of means to extract food from barren soils, or obtain shelter in rigorous seasons. The most authentic traditions, and the ascertained progress of civilization, concur with this presumption. The Western parts of Europe were civilized by Roman conquest; the Romans only brought into Gaul, Spain and Britain, the arts and knowledge which they had themselves received from Greece; the Greeks recognized Egypt and Asia as the source whence their own art and science had proceeded. In the Ancient world, at least, there is no authenticated instance of any insulated community attaining to high eminence in arts and knowledge. Egypt can scarcely be considered as an exception to the fact, that all which distinguishes civilized man has been derived from Asia; where Africa approaches Asia, or is known to have had communication with it, there we find civilization—but barbarism in all other regions; a reasonable presumption that Egypt, though geographically part of Africa, owes nothing to this connection, except an element of her population. The Southern latitudes of Asia are pointed out by a variety of circumstances,—by their genial climate, by their being the native country of the domestic animals, and by their rich variety of spontaneous vegetable

productions, as a suitable theatre for the early history of man. But whether China or India, the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, or some intermediate region, as Bactriana, can claim to have been the point whence civilization has diffused itself, is a question which we have no means of deciding. Nor can we absolutely pronounce, that no elder people preceded even the eldest of these, from whom they may have received the knowledge of which they have been immemorially in possession. History is silent respecting any such people: and the theories of Bailly, that the traces of their science are to be found in the astronomy of the Eastern nations; and of Gosselin,[1] that the earliest measures of the earth are the remnants of a system of measurement, prior to the times of historical tradition—have made few converts. About 3000 years before the Christian æra is the utmost limit to which we can carry up the *history* of civilization, and from this time to our own, the line of its descent is unbroken.

Man has no history except in the social state, which is so congenial to his nature and so essen-

[1] See his Dissertation prefixed to the French Translation of Strabo. The idea appears to have been borrowed from Bailly. Gatterer supposed the Phœnicians to be the authors of these ancient measurements.

tial to the development of his faculties, that if the human race were not created under such circumstances as to allow of his entering at once into social relations, he would form them as soon as their numbers had multiplied sufficiently. The steps by which he attained the condition in which we find him, in the earliest history, are unknown, and no speculation will enable us to recover them. We have no ground for assuming that all mankind once lived by the chace, that the pasturage of cattle was their next occupation, and that they reached the agricultural state only after being long detained in the inferior stages of culture. There is no reason to believe that the Troglodytes of the Red Sea, or the Ichthyophagi of the Persian Gulf, or the Nomadic tribes of Arabia or Tartary, represent the state in which the progenitors of the civilized nations in their neighbourhood lived. The mode of subsistence depends on soil and climate; the pastoral life becomes necessary, where corn cannot be raised, and the *nomadic,* or that of a wandering shepherd, where pasture is found only at intervals. Nations who follow this mode of life, usually live under the simplest form of polity in which society can hold together; whereas the high cultivation of land implies its secure posses-

sion, and this again the establishment of law. But nothing indicates that man necessarily passes through the pastoral to the agricultural state. A country which, from its marshes and forests, was once unfit for agriculture, may be rendered fit for tillage; but even in this case it will generally be found that its population has been changed, or that some external impulse has given rise to the improvement. History does not furnish a single example of a nation emerging, by its own efforts, from the condition of hunters, fishers, or shepherds. Such changes have always been brought about by contact with a more civilized race, and very generally purchased by the loss of national independence, or even personal liberty.

As man can have no history but in the social state, so we cannot conceive of him as existing without the use of Language. It is not so properly an *invention* of man, that is, the result of his intellect acting upon the powers and properties of things extraneous to himself, as an instinctive *function* of the combined organs of thought and utterance. The object of this instinct is communication, and its apparent absence in those who have been brought up in an insulated state, is no objection to its being a natural function of man,

even if there were no reason to suppose that the individuals in question were half idiotic by nature. It is as natural to the human being to speak articulately, as to the brutes to communicate by inarticulate sounds. The difficulty which has been felt in conceiving how language should have originated, has been caused by considering it as something purely arbitrary and conventional; and as such a conventional system could scarcely be established without the use of language, it seemed that the existence of the thing to be explained was involved in the explanation of its origin. But that it is not arbitrary in its forms, is proved by the circumstance, which Adelung has noticed, that the roots of any language will be found not to exceed a few hundreds, while the possible combinations of vocal sound, even excluding those which are too harsh for pronunciation, amount to a number hardly to be expressed by figures.[1] The etymology and grammar of language clearly show, that their growth and forma-

[1] Mithridates, Einl. p. xvi. xv. "Fulda found in the German from 300—400 roots; Court de Gebelin, not 400 in the French; Fourmont, only 300 in the Greek, with all its copiousness; Bayer and Fourmont 330—350 in the Chinese." On the other hand, "Leibnitz, in his *Ars Combinatoria*, makes the combinations of 24 letters exceed *half a quadrillion*."

tion from these simple elements has not been an arbitrary process, but has been carried on with a purpose of making vocal sound a more exact representative of the operations and affections of the mind. It is true, that language, as we now see it propagated, appears to be learnt by passive imitation. Yet the child, following some internal impulse of his own, is for ever showing a disposition to go beyond the barriers which grammar and usage have set up, to coin new words, or follow out new analogies. If, in the absence of all recorded example of the manner in which language has been formed, we may venture to speculate on its progress, we should seek its origin in the imitation of the sounds of external nature. Words framed in evident imitation of these sounds, are found in all languages, the most polished, as well as the most rude. The range of this *onomatopoeia* in any language bears, indeed, a very small proportion to the whole number of its roots: but when once the difficulty of mutual understanding had been got over, by the association of this sound, with the natural object or phænomenon which the sound characterized, it would be easy to derive from these a multitude of analogical meanings, sounds of peculiar quality being connected, by a natural

affinity, with mental states and emotions. The further we recede from audible resemblances between the word and the thing signified, the more difficult we find it to fix, in what the relation between word and thought consists. Even when we feel its existence most strongly, we are at a loss to define it. Yet were there not some such natural connection, which, though obscurely felt on both sides, aided the speaker to select the word which he makes the symbol of his thought, and the hearer to appreciate its significance, there could have been no advance towards mutual understanding among men. The establishment of language would be greatly aided by the plasticity of the human countenance, which is furnished with muscles not found in the irrational animals, whose sole use is to express the feelings; and by the range of imitative gesture supplied by the hands.[1]

Speech is one of the most unchangeable habits of mankind, if we regard the elements and great analogies of language; and a common speech one of the closest bonds of the social union. Finding, therefore, that the migrations and intermixture of nations, where they can be historically traced,

[1] Sir C. Bell, Anatomy of Expression, Essay v. p. 121.

leave proofs of their occurrence in similarity of language, we are entitled to infer that where the same similarity exists, without any historical solution, migration and intermixture have been the cause. The certainty of this conclusion will not be weakened by what has been said of the natural connection between sounds and the objects or ideas which they express, except where it is pushed so far, as to make the coincidence of a few words in two different languages, a ground for maintaining the original identity or affinity of nations. This principle, which, followed out under the control of the rules of inductive philosophy, has furnished modern inquirers with so many curious conclusions respecting the early connection of nations, widely separated by their present locality, no doubt led men also, in very remote times, to speculate on the affinity of those tribes whose speech they had the means of observing and comparing. Such speculations must necessarily be crude, because the philosophical study of the analogies of language was unknown in the ancient world, even in the period of its highest intellectual culture, and the means of acquiring an accurate knowledge of a foreign tongue were very scanty. Where we find a nation carrying up the line of its

own descent to the commencement of the human race, we find also that it assumes, in its speculations and etymologies, the high or primæval antiquity of its own language. According to the popular conceptions of the Jews, the primitive language of mankind was precisely the same as that in which their earliest literature was composed. Even in the ante-diluvian history, all the etymologies are purely Hebrew. To one who inquires into the causes of the visible affinity of language among nations, with an accurate knowledge of their structure, and of the various circumstances of an ethnographical kind, which must be considered in connection with language, the problem appears very complex, and its historical solution doubtful, if not impossible. Such difficulties would not embarrass those whose attention was caught in early times by the obvious fact of a similarity of speech; and as the problem was simple, genealogical descent offered a simple solution of it. The oldest and most remarkable document of this kind, is that contained in the tenth chapter of the Book of Genesis. If it be regarded as exhibiting the state of knowledge and opinion among the people with whom it originated, respecting the relationship of the tribes of men, whose languages were

known to them, it will be found to contain materials for history of the highest value. That knowledge, however, was certainly imperfect in extent, if not in quality, and the opinions founded upon it, must, therefore, be open to correction from other sources. It proceeds throughout, upon the supposition, that personal descent has been the origin of national affinity; and thus not only names evidently plural, as *Mizraim, Ludim, Philistim,* and collective names, as *Cush* and *Elisha,* appear as individuals, parents of nations, in its tables of descent, but even names of cities, as *Tarshish* and *Sidon.* As it originated among a people who themselves belonged to the family which claimed the patriarch Shem for their progenitor, it points out the affinity which united its different branches, the Assyrians,[1] Syrians, Hebrews and Arabians, an affinity attested by independent evidence, and the close resemblance of their languages, most of them existing at the present hour. But we are not to expect the same accuracy in regard to nations which lay beyond the sphere of their observation, or to find the traces of one original

[1] Gesenius (Heb. Spr. 62) denies that the Assyrian language belonged to the Syro-Arabian family, but, as it appears, on insufficient grounds.

language, among the various tribes to whom Ham and Japheth are assigned as progenitors. In regard to them we must have recourse to other evidence, chiefly brought to light by the researches of the last half century. By means of these it has been shown, that a similarity both in roots and in structure, too close and too extensive to be the result of accident, has extended from the Peninsula of India, through Bactriana and Persia, Greece and Italy, and the furthest limits of the Celtic, Gothic and Slavonic tribes in Europe. Such a similarity, reasoning from known phænomena, we can only attribute to affinity or intermixture of the nations by whom these languages were spoken. Yet in history there is no record, not even a tradition, of any events by which such intermixture can be explained; we cannot even frame a theory to account for it, without supposing a state of things entirely different from that condition of the world, which history at its opening discloses to us. Where the affinity is most evident, we cannot say with certainty which is the elder, which the parent, and which the child. The study of comparative philology is, indeed, still in its infancy, and its progress has been embarrassed, in this country at least, by the tacit or express

assumption, that the existence of nations speaking languages so different as to be mutually unintelligible, was separated by the interval of only a few generations from the time when the whole human race had one uniform speech. From this young but vigorous science, much clearer insight into the affinities and filiations of mankind may be expected; but the times in which they were established will still remain essentially ante-historic. The wide-spread family of languages, which has been called Indo-European, differs in most of its roots, still more in its etymological principles and grammatical forms, from the Semitic or Syro-Arabian family. Of the people supposed to be descended from Ham, only one, the Egyptian, has handed down to us any memorials of its ancient language; but these are sufficient to show that it differed essentially from both the foregoing. The monosyllabic languages of Eastern Asia, those of the nomadic nations in its Northern and Central regions, of the interior of Africa, the islands of the Indian Seas and the Pacific, and of the New World, do not come within our view in treating of primæval history. They are so manifold and various, that it is impossible to assign to them a common origin in a single locality, without ascending to

an antiquity far exceeding all authentic chronology. A period so limited as that which is ordinarily supposed is quite inadequate to explain the difference which has existed, from the very commencement of history, between the Coptic and Syro-Arabian languages, or even the Hebrew and the Syriac.[1] To the historian, the great nations of antiquity are *autochthones*; we cannot say whence or at what time the Egyptians came into Egypt, or the Hindus into India; or even the Pelasgi and Hellenes into Greece.

We have said that speech is rather a function than an invention of man, but the employment of a written symbol to record and communicate the spoken word is properly an invention, and the most important of all those by which civilization has been advanced. All that lies before the time of its introduction has been irretrievably lost to history, and much no doubt that happened after that event, and before its application to the purpose of preserving history. Its use in some form or other is immemorial in Egypt and Asia, but we cannot even conjecture the date of its invention, or the time and manner of its diffusion. What we find in ancient authors on these subjects

[1] Gen. 31, 47.

are evidently mythic fictions of a much later age. The Egyptians referred it to a Thoth, the Jews to Seth, or his children,[1] the Greeks to Hermes. But Thout in Coptic,[2] שת in Hebrew, Ἑρμῆς[3] in Greek, are all names for a pillar or post; and the real fact hidden under these several fables, is that a pillar was the earliest monument on which the art of writing was employed, or at least, as being the most durable, passed for the most ancient. We are carried back, by retracing the history of the diffusion of the art, to the same region in which we have already found the earliest marks of civilization, but we cannot fix on any precise spot to which its origin may be referred. The Phœnician alphabet has been the parent of the Greek and Roman, and it is not improbable that it has itself originated from the phonetic alphabet of the Egyptians, which is known to have been in use at the building of the pyramids. This alphabet represented fifteen sounds, R and L not being distinguished. The appropriation of a separate character for one of these would give sixteen, the original number of the Greek alphabet.[4]

[1] Joseph. Ant. i. 2, 3.

[2] Peyron, Lexicon Linguæ Copticæ s. voc. Gen. 19, 26. in the Coptic version.

[3] This is the Homeric use of ἕρμα and ἑρμίς. Il. α′, 486. Od. η′, 278.

[4] Plut. Plat. Quæst. x. 1. p. 1009. F. Pliny, N. H. 7, 56.

This phonetic use of hieroglyphic characters would lead us to regard picture-writing as the remote source of the alphabet; but in the cuneiform character of the Persepolitan inscriptions we have an example of an alphabet which has no connection with picture-writing, and has evidently been formed by combinations of a single character. The antiquity of the inscriptions existing at Persepolis, and other places within the dominions of the Achæmenidæ, is not very great; but the bricks which compose the ruined structures of Babylon bear impressions of a character very closely allied, though not identical. The Devanagari, the character in which the Sanscrit Literature is written, bears no resemblance to any of the alphabets of Western Asia: and that of China, and the countries in which monosyllabic languages prevail, is not alphabetical. It denotes objects and ideas by immediate association with the visible sign appropriated to them, not by analysis of the sounds of language. We have thus, in four great centres of ancient civilization, four separate modes of denoting and communicating thought, so dissimilar to each other, as to lead to the conclusion, that they are separate inventions.

It has been a speculation, that mankind had

their first abode on mountains, or at least in elevated regions, because these were first left dry by the retreating waters of the Deluge, or first raised by the expansive central force; or because they afforded security during the prevalence of lawless violence. Yet it is certain that the earliest known seats of civilization in the East were the rich alluvial soil, which forms the banks of mighty rivers. These, under every climate, invite the early settlements of men, by their various conveniences; but in those latitudes in which history begins, a plain without a river is a desert, the sky either furnishing, as in Egypt, no moisture by which exhalation can be replaced, or only at such long intervals that a drought would regularly intervene between the rainy seasons. Such countries, being in some measure insulated by the chains of hills which bound them, favour the tranquil diffusion of population, and the commencement of the social union. The *nucleus*, at least, of the great kingdoms which we find in existence when history begins, appears to have been formed of tribes speaking the same language; and without this bond, no voluntary coalition would probably have taken place. In the valley of the Nile, below Syene, and on the banks of the Mesopotamian

rivers, only one language, with dialectic differences, prevailed. We know less of India, but if it be true that the Sanskrit, though now obsolete, runs through all the native idioms of the Peninsula, we may conclude that it was once the national language. Not only is there no sympathy, tending to union, between those who speak different languages—there is absolute repugnance; they are *barbarians* to each other. With a community of language, similarity of institutions and religion is naturally combined, and the belief of a common origin binds all together, by a tie as strict and sacred as that of family. Even the physical resemblances which generally prevail among those whose speech is the same, dispose to union, and a marked difference is a cause of repulsion.

Government originates in the instinct of man for society: none of its purposes can be attained without the control of some superior. He not only submits, from necessity, to force greater than his own, but from a natural sentiment to greater wisdom and superior virtue. It is, indeed, as much from sentiment as from necessity, that he is so generally disposed to yield pre-eminence to those whom nature has marked by their greater strength and loftier stature; since the difference in brute force,

which this conformation gives, might easily be compensated by the combination of the weaker. Submission to authority being, therefore, an indispensable condition of society, man falls into it, without any formal compact, stipulating protection on one side, and obedience on the other. We find in the earliest historic times, mankind not only obeying the patriarchal authority of age and wisdom, but living under monarchies, and even hereditary monarchies, in which the law of succession places absolute power in the hands of feebleness and folly. Absurd as such a rule may appear, when tried by the standard of utility, there is no ground for believing that it was always imposed on an unwilling people, by foreign conquest or military usurpation. Nor is its origin to be sought in the hereditary transmission of wealth and its attendant power, nor in the artifices of parental affection, or ambition desirous to prolong its authority, after death, in the line of its descendants. It is sentiment, not a calculation of benefit, which made, and still makes, the nations of the East, like those of Russia, glory in the power of their sovereign, though it involves their own servitude, and sacrifice life and substance for his gratification. The fiction of a divine nature

or descent may increase this sentiment, but is not its primary source. It is because their king is glorious and venerable in their eyes, that they readily lend themselves to this belief; the fiction is but the expression of a deep and pervading feeling. The same sentiment is transferred, by a natural association, from the parent to the child, who is more readily acknowledged as chief than the son of a stranger. The impulse of feeling may be controlled by considerations of utility, interest may be stronger than gratitude, state necessity may demand the throne for an abler or an older man; and hereditary right, so strongly guarded by law and opinion as to resist all these considerations, implies an artificial state of society. But in its origin it is congenial to human nature, and the same sentiment operates in common life, to secure to the child what the father has possessed. The oriental mind has always been more imaginative than that of the western nations; political institutions in the East have been little influenced by reasonings on the purpose of government, and the feeling of reverence and submission towards the monarch has there exhibited an intensity and depth, which, with us, is at most occasional. Yet, considerations of utility may

have enforced and perpetuated what natural sentiment had begun. One of the first wants of society is a strong executive for the maintenance of order. Monarchy best provides for this, and the tyranny into which it easily degenerates is acquiesced in, for the sake of a great and permanent good.

Aristocracy, as a transmitted distinction, owes, like monarchy, its influence over mankind, more to sentiment than to the material superiority, conferred by wealth, or strength, or military skill. It may be reasonably presumed to have originated in excellence of some kind; but its roots everywhere reach beyond the commencement of history. We may trace our own aristocracy, from its actual foundation in custom and law, to the appropriation of land by victorious chieftains, in the Conquest of England, or the overthrow of the Western Empire, but an aristocracy of descent already existed in Germany,[1] distinct from military rank, when fixed property in land, and the use of the precious metals, were unknown.

Law has its origin in the sentiments and sympathies of mankind; the magistrate, whatever be his name, does not give to them their notions of

[1] Tac. Mor. Germ. 7. Reges ex *nobilitate*, duces ex virtute sumunt. Comp. 5. 26.

justice and right, but fulfils, or at most completes and defines, the conception, which nature has implanted in their breasts, and upholds the general and lasting conviction of the community, against the passion or interest of the individual. A state in which no feeling of social duty, no sense of the rights of a fellow-man, existed, is as much a fiction as the golden age, in which there was no selfishness and no crime. But this sympathy, which all legislation, whether human or divine, presupposes, and without which no code, whether enforced by temporal or eternal sanctions, would be efficacious, is unfolded by slow degrees, and a right not supported by might, would be imperfectly acknowledged, and violated at every impulse. Among the nations who were earliest in civilization, and consequently in history, three circumstances principally distinguish the social relations from our own—the relative condition of man and woman, of parent and child, of master and slave. One principle pervades them all, that sacrifice of the happiness of the weaker to the stronger, which man is always prone to exact, when his selfishness is not controlled by his own affections, or by the more enlightened views and more humane feeling of the community to which he belongs.

This knowledge and feeling, however, will not be far in advance of that of the individual, and domestic relations are of too refined and subtle a nature to admit of much control by positive law. They usually remain what natural sentiment has made them. The indirect control of an enlightened public opinion, which is even more efficacious than law, in checking the influence of selfishness and passion in domestic life, and procuring respect to the rights of the weaker, could scarcely exist in early times, when the means of the communication of opinion were so limited.

1. Marriage is an institution coeval with civilization, and it is only in mythology that we find an origin assigned to it.[1] The permanent union of those between whom the conjugal relation has existed, and been followed by the birth of children, is the result of natural sentiment, and its importance to the order of society is so obvious, that it has early received the sanction of law. But it requires a much higher refinement of this natural sentiment to limit this union to one. In the East, where women grow old at an earlier age than in our climate, monogamy meets with a strong obstruction in the passions of the male sex, and

[1] Goguet, i. p. 22.

has never established itself, except where religion has condemned polygamy, or poverty has made the expensive luxury of the harem unattainable.[1]

2. Nature herself gives into the hands of the parent a power more despotic than she grants in any other relation. To the difference of physical strength is added that of a matured and an infant understanding; life, subsistence, health, the communication of knowledge — all depend on the pleasure of the father, who, as master in the conjugal relation, disposes of the fate of the common offspring. But this terrible power is tempered by a force of sympathy, which no other relation exhibits, to guard against its abuse; and many strong feelings intervene, to shield the helplessness of the child. Pride, as well as affection, interests the father in behalf of his son; it is through him that he hopes to live in a future generation; it is to his love that he must trust for that care which his declining years will demand. Still the general characteristic of the relation between the parent and the child in early times, as far as history has preserved any account of it, is, that the

[1] The counterpart of polygamy, what has been called *polyandria*, the possession of the same woman by many men, does not appear to have prevailed among the nations of the East in early times.

parent enjoyed a degree of irresponsible authority, much greater than modern legislation allows. The humanity of the laws of Egypt forbade the exposure of infants; in the other great monarchies even this restriction does not appear to have been placed upon the *patria potestas*. Where the direct power of government is the least, the greatest rigour and hardness prevails in the domestic relations; they supply the place of legal authority, in keeping society together, and it is only a government both vigilant and strong that could undertake their regulation.

3. The abolition of slavery is one of the last effects of the growth of a more comprehensive sympathy, in purifying the social relations, from institutions founded on the abuse of strength. In the earliest ages it was universal, and no sentiment forbade the application of the same right of possession to a fellow-creature and a brute. It may often have originated in voluntary compact, under the influence of want, more frequently in war, kidnapping, or a judicial sentence for debt or crime. The impossibility of regulating by law such a relation as that of master and slave, is a fatal objection to its existence, even where law is most humane in its spirit, and vigorous in its

execution; and in the absence of legal protection, that which the slave obtains from natural sympathy is small, especially if he be a foreigner. Yet where the simplicity of manners allowed the master and the slave to share the same domestic pleasures and occupations, reciprocal affection sprang up; among the Jews at least, the condition of the hireling, who had no fixed service or abode, was regarded as more miserable than servitude. We find that the Egyptians maintained an honourable pre-eminence among the monarchies of early civilization, in regard to the protection of slaves, and the Mosaic code contained many provisions for alleviating their lot.

Another circumstance which strongly characterizes the early monarchies of the East, is the division of the population into *castes,* or hereditary orders and professions, the son being limited to the occupation which his father had pursued. The extent to which this has been carried varies; in Media and Persia, and in Judæa, only the sacerdotal body appear to have formed a caste; in India and Egypt, the priests and warriors were certainly distinct from the other orders of the community, who were themselves sub-divided into two or more hereditary classes, though we know not exactly on what

principle. Nothing in the known history of these countries, or of Attica or Iberia, where a fourfold division prevailed,[1] indicates that this distinction was connected with an original difference of race, or that it was produced by conquest, or established by positive legislation, or arranged by mutual compact. The circumstance that in some countries it extended only to the priests, who could not by force have obtained for themselves exclusive privileges, points to some natural cause, operating in all ancient communities, but with variable force. Whoever possesses any knowledge or skill which is denied to others, is raised by it to superior estimation, and even substantial power. This advantage he naturally seeks to perpetuate, like any other, in the line of his own descent, admits his children to the participation of his secret, but carefully excludes the stranger. The priest, who is believed to be alone in possession of the all-important knowledge, how the favour of the gods is to be gained, and their wrath averted, easily transmits his monopoly to another generation; and in proportion as the system of theology becomes more complex and mysterious, or the ritual more elaborate, the difficulty of an

[1] Herod. 5, 66. Strabo. B. 8. p. 383.

attempt to break through it is increased. The warrior, who trains his children to the use of arms, leaves them the means of maintaining themselves and their descendants, in a station only second to that of the priest. When the processes of art are not laid open in writing to the public, but communicated by personal instruction, and a long course of practice under the teacher's eye, it is easy for the father to secure it as a *craft and mystery* to his son. This tendency throughout society, to the establishment of hereditary succession, manifests itself at the present day; but being checked by the general diffusion of knowledge, the eagerness of competition, and the freedom of political institutions, it can never advance to the establishment of a *caste*. In the East, it was early adopted, more or less extensively, as a fundamental law of society; the higher castes guarded the purity of their blood, by refusing intermarriage with the lower, and resorted to mythic fiction, to give antiquity and divine sanction to their monopoly. In monarchies, the strict confinement of every man to the rank and occupation which his birth has assigned him, is a security against the ambition which might aspire to the throne itself, and keeps society in that passive state, which is most

safe and acceptable to those who enjoy exclusive privileges. In the earlier stages of civilization, the existence of castes may prevent the loss of knowledge or skill once acquired, as it certainly tends to retard the diffusion of that which has been gained. We might have been tempted to attribute chiefly to it the stability of Eastern governments, and the absence of progressive improvement, did not the example of China, in which castes are unknown, prove that this is at least not the only cause from which monotony and uniformity may spring.

The forms of religious belief which we find prevailing among the earliest civilized nations of antiquity, present a similarity which must have been caused either by a common historical origin, or common principles in human nature. Whatever knowledge of a pure and spiritual theism may have been supernaturally communicated to men in primæval times, was lost, except in the family of Abraham, in its Hebrew and Arabian branches, before history begins. We have, therefore, to regard the religion of the Egyptians or Babylonians, as the result of their own feeling and speculation, like their opinions on natural or moral philosophy. The belief in an unseen Power appears to begin

rather in feeling than in speculation. Man is conscious of a double nature within himself; he feels that besides the body which he can touch, whose parts he can distinguish and assign to their several uses, there is something whose nature and seat he cannot define, whose substance he cannot grasp, at once interfused with the body and distinct from it, wielding its powers and guiding them by intelligence and a moral purpose. This internal feeling leads him to believe that the World beyond himself is animated by a similar presiding Intelligence, and he explains its phænomena by the agency of a spiritual Essence which inhabits and informs it. To this conception of a god, he transfers his own moral feelings, and Providence is only a copy of the votary's internal being. So far he is a Monotheist. But his speculation takes also a more objective form; he sees in nature a variety of objects and energies, independent and even opposite in their qualities and operations, and creates an intelligent power, by which he supposes each of them to be animated. The former mode of conceiving of god, appears to lie nearer to the human mind; but which has actually been first, in order of time, is a question very difficult to be decided on historical testimony. Nations have been found, at a

very low point in the scale of civilization, having no communication with tribes of more cultivated understanding, no source of supernatural knowledge, who have conceived of the Supreme Being as one great Spirit. Even where the most complex system of polytheism had been established, in the popular belief and worship, there seems to have co-existed with it, not only in the philosophical, but also in the vulgar mind, a recognition indicated by the forms of speech,[1] of one supreme controlling Power. Indeed, a complicated and well-defined system of mythology must be the work of a nation that has made no mean progress in culture. Poetry and art must lend their aid to embody and discriminate the vague conceptions with which polytheism begins. The Pelasgi worshipped the gods by a general appellation; the Hellenic poets of the school of Homer and Hesiod first gave them a history and distinguishing attributes,[2] and inspired the artist with sublime models. Egypt, India, Babylonia and Phœnicia, are equally conspicuous for high civilization and for the extent of their Pantheon. In the systematized form in

[1] Cum jurant, et cum optant et cum gratias agrent, non Jovem aut deos multos sed Deum nominant. Lactant. Div. Inst. 2, 1.

[2] Herod. 2, 53.

which mythology has reached us, we see everywhere the endeavour to combine the notion of unity with that of multitude, by representing the many gods as manifestations or offspring of one, and by their subordination to preserve the harmony of the whole.

The belief in a spiritual divinity, naturally produces the endeavour, by intense contemplation, to arrive at a more intimate union with God and more distinct conception of his being. Religion has assumed this form in India from the earliest recorded times; how far it prevailed in the other countries of the East we know not, for a contemplative religion does not, like a ritual, leave traces of itself in the works of art. Egypt was, in the Christian age, the parent of the eremitic and monastic life; and as religious history is only the development of certain principles inherent in man, modified by special circumstances and national character, it is probable that such a form of religion co-existed with the public and ceremonial in earlier times. A contemplative religion naturally becomes ascetic; the body is considered as an antagonist to the mind, impeding its operations and preventing its ascent to the Deity, and therefore to be mortified and reduced. The self-inflicted

tortures of the ascetic belong to another feeling; the same consciousness of guilt and the endeavour to conciliate God and avert his wrath, from which expiatory sacrifice had its origin.

We may reasonably presume the high antiquity in the East, of the *orgy*, another manifestation of religious feeling. We see even in modern times, that the strong internal agitation which accompanies it, shows itself externally in passionate cries, violent gestures and rapid movement. Stimulated by sympathy, and the accompaniments of a wild music and artificial light, it assumed the character of a frenzy. The prevalence of dancing, as a part of religious ceremonies, appears to be the effect of the same tendency in this feeling to find a vent and relief in movement, tempered and regulated by that sense of harmony and rhythm, which is one of the ultimate facts of the constitution of man.

Man naturally seeks to fill the immense void between himself and God, by peopling it with a race of intermediate beings, of whom the mind more easily conceives. Under various names, such a class of derived and inferior divinities appears in all the ancient theologies. The doctrine of emanations and incarnations appears to have had the

same source, the desire to invest a spiritual nature with some material form, which should render it more apprehensible by human faculties. Philosophy and popular religion have directly opposite tendencies. While philosophy, by reducing all the operations of nature under demonstrated laws, not only dispenses with intermediate supernatural agency, but even removes the Supreme cause to a dim and almost infinite distance, popular religion seeks to draw him down from the heaven of heavens, to nearer communion with his creatures and more immediate superintendence of their affairs. To this extent the religionist and the philosopher are necessarily antagonists; but each holds a portion of the truth, and it is only intolerance, on the one side or the other, that makes them enemies.

The theology of the Gentiles was long supposed to have originated in the deification of departed human spirits. The passions, actions and outward form of humanity, had been attributed to their gods so entirely by the Greeks and Romans, that it was almost an unavoidable inference, that they had once been human beings, raised to the rank of divinity by the gratitude of mankind. It suited the views of those who wished to bring the popular theology into contempt, so to consider the gods,

and Euhemerus, an Epicurean philosopher, feigned himself to have discovered, in a voyage to Panchaia, a record of their births and actions.[1] The Christian writers availed themselves of this supposed origin, to expose the absurdity of polytheism; those who cultivated ancient history, after the revival of letters, adopted it very generally, and Osiris, Bacchus, Belus and Jupiter appear in their histories as sovereigns of their respective countries.[2] This place they could not hold, when antiquity was studied in a more free and comprehensive spirit, for it was found that no art could give historical consistency and chronological order to their supposed actions, even when the number of those who had borne the same name was multiplied with the most arbitrary license.[3] The plausibility which this explanation wore, when applied to Greek or Roman mythology, disappeared when it was tried on those of other countries, whose gods retained more of their primitive character. No greater permanence has attended the opinion that

[1] Diod. Sic. Fr. lib. 6. 2, 632. ed. Wessel.

[2] Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms is entirely built on the basis of Euhemerism, of the most extreme kind.

[3] Nullo prope sæculo defuit suus Jupiter usque ad tempora belli Trojani. Voss. Idol. 1, 14. p. 58. He reckons two if not three Argive Jupiters, two Cretan, &c.

the Gentile Deities were the fallen angels, who thus revenged themselves on the true God, by usurping his honour;[1] or the personages of Scripture history, Adam and the ante-diluvian Patriarchs, Noah and his sons, Abraham and his descendants.[2] It is indeed evident that the belief in gods cannot have begun with the deification of men, since the very act implies the previous conception of a god. Much of what we call the heroic worship of the Greeks, appears to have been only a worship of the great gods, under forgotten names; but when they really paid divine honours to the illustrious dead, they were quite aware of the nature of their worship, and distinguished it, both in name and form, from that which they paid to the gods.[3] The deification of deceased rulers was a piece of flattery understood by all, and as little connected with serious belief, as the attribution of the title *god,* to a living king of Syria or Egypt.

[1] It happily survived to the time of Milton, and gave occasion to the splendid passage, Par. Lost. 1. 380—475.

[2] Fourmont, Reflexions Critiques sur les Anciens Peuples. "Que Junon est Rebecca" is the title of Ch. 12. Lib. ii. § 3. His system appears to have still some followers in England.

[3] Herod. 2, 44. clearly marks the different nature of these two kinds of worship. That paid to the gods was θύειν, to heroes ἐναγίζειν.

We must then seek in some other cause than the human origin of the gods, the explanation of the fact, that there is so much in ancient theology which resembles the history of human beings. Man extends to the world around him, the principal analogies of his own condition; he does not rest satisfied with the simple personification of the powers of nature; he endeavours to make this personality supply a solution to the great problems which excite his curiosity. Life and its perpetual reproduction was one of these, and the most natural mode of conceiving of it was, to personify the energies of nature under the image of a male and female, to whose union the unceasing renewal of the world was ascribed. This idea pervades the mythologies of Egypt and Asia, and being carried out in symbolical narrative and rites, became a fertile source of the corrupt and debasing influence which polytheism exercised upon the public manners. The deities thus created by a rude philosophy and a sensual imagination were easily identified with those objects and elements of nature which bear the most conspicuous part in the production of all things. The Sun, the noblest visible representation of invisible power, whose rays call forth the vital energies of

the world; the Earth, which receives his influence and acknowledges it by her boundless fertility; Water, which nourishes animal and vegetable life; Fire, without whose genial influence torpor and death would overspread the world; Air, which seems the very principle of life itself,—all these, in a double aspect, as male or female, became persons, and acquired a history. The heavenly bodies, Sun, Moon, and Planets, bear a real relation, more or less influential, to our system; and this, seen in obscure glimpses, in an age when true science was in its infancy, was exaggerated by imagination into a divine control over human affairs, exercised by gods who dwelt in those orbs, or were identified with them. The Sun and Moon, especially, were invested with the dignity of king and queen of heaven, a personification familiar to the poetry of all nations, and easily passing into popular belief and historical tradition.[1] When the world was once peopled with divinities thus created, the further extension of mythology and the character it assumed depended on the people among whom it was received. In Egypt and the East it hardly ever lost its original significance, as a symbolical expression; the lively imagination

[1] Λαμπροὺς δυνάστας, ἐμπρέποντας αἰθέρι. Æsch. Ag. 6. Gen. 1. 16.

of the Greeks expanded and adorned it with so much adventitious matter, having no relation to its original purpose, that in their mythology a symbolical meaning is rarely visible. Intellectual abstractions and moral qualities also from personifications passed into persons, who were reputed to have been deified for the possession, in a pre-eminent degree, of the quality which they represented.

That fear first led men to believe in the gods,[1] is an assertion without historical evidence; but as nature and life and man's own frame contain a mixture of good and evil, their reflected image, the supernatural beings who preside over the powers of the Universe, and control the course of human events, could not be purely benevolent. To regard evil as corrective, and therefore as a part of the plan of a beneficent Providence, is a comprehension of view which reason never seems to have attained; and even the earliest mythology of the East bears marks of its struggle to effect some solution of this painful mystery. The Persian theology makes a formal division of power between the good and evil Principle, retaining only the triumph of the good, as the final consummation; and the same

[1] Stat. Theb. 3, 661.

doctrine appears, though less distinctly, in the creed of the Mesopotamian nations, whose Satan was a subordinate and dependent being, the minister, not the rival and enemy, of the supreme God. The Indian theology makes good alone to have been the purpose of the Creator, evil the result of transgression, but assigns no special deity as the representative of the evil Principle.[1] In the characters and actions of the Grecian divinities, good and bad are so much mingled, that no necessity appears to have been felt to erect the powers of evil into a distinct existence.

Though fear did not create the gods, it was a predominant element in those conceptions of them, of which prayer and worship are the expression; the mind of man being more accessible to religious emotions in the apprehension of suffering, than in the enjoyment or anticipation of good; and more quick to observe the marks of supernatural agency, in those events which appear to interrupt the usual and beneficent operation of the powers of nature. The god of an ignorant and superstitious people is made in the image of man, not only endowed with the form and organs of humanity, but partaking of its feelings and im-

[1] Bohlen altes Indien, 1, 166.

perfections. Sacrifices were offered with various motives, and infinite diversity of manner, but all resolve themselves into an assimilation of the divinity to the worshipper. The first and choicest of the fruits of the earth were presented to the god who had given them, as the natural expression of gratitude; among living things, some were only consecrated to him, by being exempted from their usual office of ministering to the use of man, that the sincerity of the offerer might be proved by his renouncing all future profit from his gift.[1] It was sometimes more completely alienated, by being slain and burnt, that its smoke and savour might ascend to the upper regions, where the gods were supposed to have their special dwelling-place. But sacrifice had other and darker aspects. The displeasure and vengeance of men are not always discriminating, nor in their degree proportioned to their cause. If prevented from wreaking them on the person of the offender, they are soothed and appeased by inflicting loss on his property or his kindred. By skilfully presenting to the angry man, some object on which his rage may spend itself, the cause of his displeasure may hope to escape. The transference of such passionate blind-

[1] S. Chrys. apud Outram de Sacrificiis, p. 7.

ness to the gods, appears to have been the origin of deprecatory and expiatory sacrifices, which have been bloody and barbarous, in proportion to the ignorance and rudeness of the people by whom they have been practised, or the magnitude of the evil which they were designed to avert. If the blood of brute animals were not sufficiently costly to appease divine wrath, a human substitute was offered, and the sacrifice by which the feelings of nature were most deeply wounded, was deemed most likely to be efficacious. Panic terror, when it has only an earthly object, can efface all natural affection; the dread of the displeasure of the gods, in times of public calamity, has so overpowered all other sentiments, that hecatombs of human victims have been offered up, in the hope of averting it. It belongs to the special history of every country to point out the variety of forms which the same principle has assumed, but the key to them all will be found in the proneness of man to suppose that the god whom he worships is "altogether such a one as himself."

The belief in the existence of a thinking and conscious principle in man, which the dissolution of the body does not destroy, was diffused among

all the nations of the highest antiquity.[1] The analogies of material nature could furnish no ground for believing in the separate existence of spirit. It is so closely connected with the belief in God, that its origin is probably the same; the internal consciousness that the seat of the intellect and the moral qualities is something distinct from the body, which may therefore not only not be affected by its destruction, but may even be more perfect and happy when freed from its corporeal shackles.

The idea of God being derived, as we have seen, from the consciousness of man, it was natural that the soul in which that consciousness resides should be identified with the divine nature which it resembles, and be considered as a portion of its essence, temporarily united with the body.

With the conception of the soul as indestructible, the idea of a retributory state has been united in various forms. Such a doctrine is forced upon the mind which has acquired even the most imperfect idea of Providence and a moral governor, by the unequal retribution of the present state. Among the oldest nations, the Egyptians and Indians, it appears in a very remarkable form—the transmigration of

[1] Windet De Vita functorum statu.

souls. The Persian doctrine of a resurrection does not appear to have penetrated to the Mesopotamian nations at a very early time, as we find no traces of it among the Jews, till after the Captivity, nor have we any distinct accounts of the belief of the Babylonians and Assyrians on this point. The Greeks and the nations of kindred origin, from the earliest times, entertained the notion of a state of retribution, in Elysium or Tartarus, immediately succeeding the present life; yet even among them, traces of a belief in the return of the soul to occupy a human body may be found.[1] The conceptions of an unseen state cannot be very definite or constant, and it is not surprising if some usages or modes of speech seem to regard death as the extinction of being, and others as a transition or advancement to a higher state. The belief in the existence of disembodied spirits mingled itself in various ways with the other articles of theology. A continued consciousness and activity suggested the idea of interest and participation in the events of the world. A higher prescience and supernatural power, an intermediate rank between mortals and immortals, seemed to belong to those who resembled

[1] Pind. Olymp. 2, 122.

the gods in their spiritual nature, and they were propitiated, and their favourable intervention invoked, by a peculiar ritual.

In all the early civilized countries we find an order of men, a *priesthood,* specially consecrated to the offices of religion. A practice so universal must have its origin in an universal feeling. Invisible power is invested at once with sanctity and awe in the believer's mind; he thinks himself not pure enough to hold a direct intercourse with his god, and seeks some one whom he regards as more holy, to act as his mediator. He endeavours to find an intercessor with god, as he would with his sovereign, if he had occasion to ask his favour or deprecate his anger, in a person of higher rank, greater refinement, or superior moral and intellectual qualities, who from these causes may have more ready access and more favourable audience than himself. The parent would naturally be the priest in the simple rites of domestic religion; the patriarchal head in those of his tribe; the chief of the nation, in national festivities and sacrifices. In a more elaborate system of faith and worship, the duties of the priesthood grow so numerous that they suffice for the occupation of a life; the idea of purity, moral and physical, is

refined upon and exalted, so that a separation from ordinary pursuits, seclusion within the walls of a sanctuary, the devotion of a considerable portion of life to ablution, meditation and prayer, become essential to the character of the mediator between God and man; and the distinction arises of the priest from the layman. An order of men so created, especially when it has become hereditary, rapidly increases in influence and wealth. Their predominant influence in the state is characteristic of all the forms of polity which in the ancient world preceded the rise of the Grecian commonwealths. It rose to the greatest height in Egypt, where perhaps, before the commencement of the monarchy, the priests constituted a *theocracy*, i. e. exercised the powers of government in the name of the gods. Since the belief in a deity is inseparable from the mind of man, a priesthood may be regarded, in some form or other, as one of the most truly primæval institutions. A sacerdotal order soon adopts purposes and a policy which may be hostile to the interests of other classes in the community; and it is tempted to extend and uphold its power by hypocrisy and fraud. But it is not in such arts that their authority begins; a strong and general

feeling must give birth to an institution which everywhere accompanies the existence of religion. It is when faith begins to languish, and the yoke of sacerdotal dominion to be impatiently borne, that a priesthood is tempted to use violence or fraud to prolong its power.

Idolatry is found everywhere in early history as the companion of polytheism. It is the resource of the mind, unable to keep its own abstractions steadily before its view; and the natural result of a tendency to use visible things, as the symbol of the invisible, and the propensity of man to attribute a human form to his divinities. The Persians are almost a solitary exception; and that they had neither statues nor altars was probably owing to their religion being a pure worship of the heavenly bodies and the elements,[1] which needed no symbols, as they are not abstractions but sensible realities. When the art of statuary was unknown, the rudest resemblance to the human form was sufficient to invest a block of stone or stock of wood with this symbolical character. Such were the Cybele of Pessinus, the conical stone of the Paphian Venus, and the god Elagabalus,[2] which, even in an age familiar with the most perfect productions

[1] Herod. 1, 131. Creuz. Mythol. 1, 182. [2] Herodian, 5, 5.

of sculpture, retained a traditional sanctity, and were more highly valued for the evidence of antiquity which the absence of art furnished. Under the name of *Fetisch* worship, this homage paid to a shapeless mass has been regarded as marking the lowest point of idolatry; yet it does not appear probable that even the most senseless idolater really believes a lifeless image to be god. Like the sword and spear of Mars, which the Scythians and Romans worshipped,[1] it is a symbol; but the sign readily becomes a substitute for the thing signified, and the use of any material emblem of the deity tends to detain the mind in gross and unspiritual conceptions.

Superstition is, in substance, a false philosophy; but while the error of a philosophical inquirer into nature terminates with the assumption of an imaginary law, or non-existent principle, superstition usually creates some being of super-human power, endowed with passions and a will, to whose agency it attributes the phænomenon by which it is perplexed. In either case, however, we shall find, that the source of the error is false reasoning from effects to causes, incomplete induction, hasty admission of unascertained facts, confusion

[1] Voss. de Idol. lib. 6. p. 150. Varro Fragm. 1. p. 375 ed. Bip.

of accidental resemblances with real analogies. This is very remarkably seen in the belief universally prevalent in the earliest ages, that a foreknowledge of the future may be obtained. Had there been in the present no foreshadowing of events to come, man would have learned to acquiesce in a hopeless ignorance. But the present is really pregnant with the future; sagacity can anticipate the general effect of causes which even now are in operation. This, however, is far from satisfying the craving of human curiosity, which seeks a knowledge of specific events and especially of coming evil. The modes which have been adopted for attaining it have not been arbitrarily chosen. Many of them consisted in attempts to draw forth from the gods the secret of their own decrees; or from inferior deities that knowledge of the counsels of the supreme god, which their relation to him enabled them to acquire; or from departed spirits some revelation of those mysteries of destiny, which they were supposed to be better able to penetrate in their disembodied state. As these supernatural beings partake of human weakness, it was thought that they might be soothed by gifts, driven by importunate intreaty, or even entrapped by dexterous management, into

the disclosure of the secret which they had determined to keep in their own breasts. The heavenly bodies accomplish their own times with such unerring regularity, that they seem endowed with prescience, as well as volition, and look down on human affairs with such a bright and comprehensive gaze, that all knowledge appears to lie open to them. Their movements regulate the seasons, which involve so many points of interest to man, and it is not wonderful if he should have extended this influence to other things, on which their position and combination has no real effect. What Virgil, in the spirit of Epicurean philosophy denied,[1] that a portion of the divine spirit dwells in the brute creation, and produces the instinctive sagacity which surpasses our reason, is quite in accordance with popular belief, and must have seemed a good ground for attributing to them foreknowledge of other things, besides what regarded their own life and wants. The birds, from their abode in the air, were presumed to be nearer to the gods, and better acquainted with their secrets than other animals; the eagle towering into the skies, returns thence as if from the immediate presence of the deity. The thunder

[1] Georg. 1, 415.

and lightning, issuing from the same mysterious region, seem like the voice of a god, or a written proclamation of his will, traced in characters of fire. To judge of the future from inspection of the entrails of a victim, and hope or fear, according as the liver was diseased or sound, seems the extreme of childish superstition; yet no doubt it had been observed, that the lower animals are affected sometimes even before man, by epidemic diseases;[1] and thus the approach of a public calamity might truly be read in the unsound state of the organs of a slaughtered animal. These are indeed slight foundations for the complex science of a Chaldean soothsayer or Tuscan augur; nor can we always perceive even this slight ground for the practices of divination; it is enough that, when their origin can be traced, it appears to be the exaggeration of a connection which really exists, the fanciful extension of a true analogy.

The superstition which from the earliest ages has attached to certain numbers, has had its origin in their occurrence in the changes of nature, and in the periodicity of some of the phænomena of life.[2] Seven is the number of the planets according to the ancient notion, which included the

[1] Schol. Vill. ad Hom. Il. A, 50. [2] Varro ap. Gell. 3, 10.

Sun and Moon; twelve, the changes of the Moon in a year; thirty, the approximate number of days in a lunation. To all these numbers, and others produced by their combination, a mysterious virtue has evidently been attached. They have been adopted in preference to others, where division may seem arbitrary; they recur in mythology and mythic history.

The proneness of man to consider himself as the central point of the system to which he belongs, and his own welfare as its primary and highest object, has greatly enlarged the range of superstitious belief and practice in regard to divination. To warn him of approaching evil, or point out to him the means of acquiring good, is a purpose of sufficient importance, to justify portents in heaven and earth; and in ages of little scientific culture this tendency to refer everything to himself is not counteracted by any knowledge of the true relations of Nature, or the unchangeableness of her laws. This disposition to believe the world around him to be full of the indications of his own destiny, is allied to that which leads him to make external nature a symbol and emblem of his own feelings, in the language of religion, of poetry, and art. For religion, and

its degenerate form superstition, are essentially states of excited imagination.

The influence of dreams, in the earliest ages, as indications of the future, deserves to be especially noticed, from its connection with great historical events. The dreams of Pharaoh changed the history of the Jewish people; Sabaco withdrew from Egypt in obedience to a dream; Astyages exposed his grandson, and ultimately overturned his own empire, through terror of a dream. The dream of Xerxes decided the invasion of Greece, and remotely the fate of Persia; the dream of Calpurnia, in a less philosophical age, would have prevented the assassination of Cæsar. That a man should permit the incoherent suggestions of sleep to guide his actions, and even to set aside the combinations of sagacity, appears hardly consistent with the attribute of reason. Yet it has a natural cause. The mind often reproduces in dreams the results of the meditations of the day, and presents them with a scenic vividness which impresses them more strongly than mere meditation. This connection, however, is not perceived, when the laws which regulate our trains of thought have not been studied: it is because the dream springs up within the mind itself, that it

carries more authority than the deductions of reason. Detached from all impressions of the world of sense, the mind is more fitted for receiving communications from the world of spirit, and the convictions thus stamped upon it appear to proceed from a divine hand. It is on the same principle, that words casually spoken or taken out of their real connection, have been supposed to carry a supernatural import, and the gods to speak through the mouths of those whose faculties are suspended by a trance or a fit, or even impaired by fatuity. We are prone also to notice the exception, more than the rule, of our experience; and hence one remarkable coincidence between a supposed prognostic and the event procures credit for such a mode of judging of the future, which many failures cannot destroy.

Such is the appearance which society presents, when its features first become visible to us in the dawn of historic times, in Egypt and the East. We may rely with some confidence on the general causes which have been assigned for its peculiarities, because they are found in human nature, and are invariable. The special causes, the historical events which determined the distribution of

population, the peculiar forms of religion and government, the state of knowledge and art, elude our research; they have not been recorded, and cannot be divined. Nor have we reason to hope that monuments and records will carry the commencement of history much further back, because the application of writing to the preservation of facts has been late, or time has destroyed its earliest results. The discoveries in Egyptian antiquities have only introduced a continuous chronology into periods of which we had no previous measure, and filled blank spaces with historical names and events; they have established the credit of accounts which had previously been viewed with scepticism, but they have added nothing to our knowledge of the commencement of the history of Egypt, the origin of its population, arts, laws and religion. When civilization has regained possession of its ancient seats in Asia, monuments now covered by the soil may be brought to light, and patient research unravel the secret of their mysterious characters. But there will still remain, before the earliest inscription, ages which we must be content to know only in their results, the infancy of the human race, too unconscious of its relation to the future, to reflect upon and re-

gister the steps by which it was advancing to maturity.

The causes which have buried primæval history in impenetrable darkness, extend their influence over many centuries, and make our knowledge of them obscure, imperfect, and comparatively uninstructive. Were not the impulse to possess ourselves of any information respecting the past irresistible, we might wonder at the eagerness with which we endeavour to establish on evidence, only probable at best, a few insulated facts in the histotories of Egypt or Assyria. Their monuments show by their magnitude and durability the vast amount of labour concentrated in their execution, and hence enable us to infer the wealth and population of the kingdom, and the powers which despotism gave to the monarch, of employing the labour of his subjects for his own gratification, or the authority of the religion, to whose rites these structures were dedicated. But how little can we learn of that which makes history most valuable, of the characters of sovereigns, of civil, military and religious institutions, of laws and their influence on the happiness of the community! Only nations which have left us *literature*, as well as *monuments*, can be so fully known, as either to be intelligible

themselves, or furnish us with any principles of historical philosophy. If the hopes of some sanguine antiquaries should be realized, and we should find ourselves in possession of a written history of the age of Rameses the Great, more light will probably be thrown on the condition of Egypt than all its monuments have hitherto afforded us. The Jewish people have no monuments; not an inscribed stone, not a sculpture or a fresco, remains from the times of their distinct existence, none at least that bears anything of a national character. But they have left us a literature of copiousness and variety, unexampled in the ages in which it was produced. From it we learn the origin and fortunes of the people, the influence of outward circumstances and their own peculiar institutions in the formation of their character; their alternations of prosperity and depression, of improvement or degeneracy; their public history and domestic life; not only the outward forms of their religion, but its influence, as penetrating and modifying the whole national mind. They are, therefore, the only nation of equal antiquity whom we really know. The mighty monarchies in their neighbourhood, between whom they preserved a precarious existence, are not understood by us;

we see them only in the mass, in the exploits of conquering sovereigns, while the true connection of the events of their history, the internal life of the people, escape from us. It is not till the Greeks began to turn their inquisitive gaze upon Egypt and the East, that these countries emerge into daylight; and it is only in Greece itself, under the combined influence of science, literature and freedom, that the perfect idea of history was realized.

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